

**Overcoming Conflicts in the Korean Immigrant Churches
in the United States : In Pursuit of
Reconciliation and Renewal**

**A Professional Project
presented to
the Faculty of the
Claremont School of Theology**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry**

**by
Jae Woong Chang
May 1998**

This professional project, completed by

Jae-Woong Chang

*has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the
School of Theology at Claremont in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of*

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

Faculty Committee

Karen Baker-Fletcher
Scott Corns

April 28, 1998
Date

Margaret Luchessa
Dean

ABSTRACT

Overcoming Conflicts in the Korean Immigrant Churches

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The purpose of this project is to explain reasons why Korean immigrant churches are suffering from church conflict in spite of their history of remarkable growth. Therefore, it analyzes the conflicts in the Korean churches in America and identifies how churches can overcome them. Moreover, this project proposes multicultural means of reconciliation and renewal for effective ministry in the Korean immigrant churches.

In Chapter 2, the historical background of Korean immigrants is presented in the Korean immigrant church. Chapter 3 analyzes conflicts inside Korean immigrant churches and offers an example of church conflict. Chapter 4 presents an understanding of the conflicts and suggests some practical ways to overcome them.

Chapter 5 develops a method of renewal and reconciliation for Korean immigrant churches and emphasizes the role of the church as a reconciling community for the future. Also, a new image of the church is developed, based on theological and biblical research.

The conclusion provides a summary of the study.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Problem Addressed by the Project

This project addresses the problem of why Korean immigrant churches are suffering from church conflict, in spite of a history of remarkable growth. Therefore, the purpose of this project is to analyze the conflicts in the Korean churches in America and to identify how Korean immigrant churches can overcome them. Moreover, this project proposes a means of dealing with the conflicts multiculturally, in order to facilitate reconciliation and renewal for effective ministry in the churches.

Importance of the Problem

Human are faced with three inescapable realities. First, individuals choose their life's objectives and actions independently. Second, there are right moments and right criteria for choosing. Third, the results of their choices will be evaluated.¹ No conflicts are purely or perfectly Christian. However, a conflict can be judged to be more or less Christian by how parties exercise power in dealing with their differences. Managing conflicts is a process of intervening by proposing constructive processes by which to deal with differences. Rather than reacting emotionally to the issues and mobilizing politically to overcome others as enemies, managing conflicts prescribes how parties may help to move from enemy making to problem solving. The aim of a well-managed conflict process is to help the organization and individuals within it become stronger rather than weaker. It can be an opportunity to grow and develop.

¹ G. Douglas Lewis, Resolving Church Conflicts (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 11.

Korean immigrants first entered the United States at the beginning of this century and one of the first things they did was establish churches. By the early 1930s, the Korean population was about 10,000 in Hawaii; there were some thirty Korean churches, twenty-two of which were Methodist. On the mainland, they also established churches wherever they lived, though there were not many Koreans until 1965. With the relaxation of immigration laws after 1965, a new flux of immigrants accelerated the growth of the church: while there were less than eighty churches in 1970, there were over seven hundreds in 1980. As of 1997, there were more than three hundred Korean United Methodist Churches in the U.S. Presently, eighty percent of Korean-American people in the United States are considered Christians.² There are 2914 Korean churches in the United States.³ And it is expected that there will be three thousand by the year 2000.⁴

In the shadow of such remarkable growth, however, there has been another history of the church, that of church split. The church should be a place where people can be healed from their suffering, pain and frustration. What is the main reason for the disunity of our churches ? Why are church fights so often so devastating? Why are Korean immigrant churches formed with great enthusiasm but then so often end up in

² United Methodist Church (U.S), Office of Asian-American Ministries, Asian-American Directory (New York : General Board of Global Ministries, 1995).

³ Korean Churches Directory of North America (Los Angeles: Korean Christian Press, 1997).

⁴ Taek-Young Kim, Church Growth (Seoul : Word of Life Press, 1985), 16.

conflict and even schism? Are Christians more sinful or crazier than non-Christian? Is such conflict peculiar to immigrant churches?

When a church has within its body various groups of people with different thought patterns, value judgments, cultures, and human individuality it is natural for mutual opposition and conflict to exist.⁵ There are several special factors that make Korean immigrant churches unusually open to conflict. When there is a fight in an church, one or more of the following factors is working.

Cultural

The Korean-American church has a unique problem because Korean immigrants are in the process of making social, economical and cultural adjustments. Since the early period of immigrant history, the Church has been the center of the Korean-American community. This is so because, on the one hand, most of the first immigrants were Christians and established their community around the Church, and on the other, because later immigrants, whether Christian or not, were attracted to church. It was the only place where they would speak their own language and share their culture with one another. The immigrant churches have thus functioned as meeting places for their ethnic communities, and as centers for preserving and educating in their culture and language groups that have suffered from racial and socio economic discrimination in the U.S. This has contributed to the growth of immigrant churches in the U.S.

⁵ Chang-Wook Choi, "Managing Conflict in the Church" in Korean American Ministry, eds. Sang Hyun Lee and John V. Moore (Louisville: Presbyterian Church USA., 1993), 90.

Therefore, the Church is not only a religious institution but a cultural base for Korean immigrants. At least, that is, for the first generation of immigrants who have a common interest in keeping their traditional values. Such an emphasis often leads to indifference and apathy on the part of the second generation who feel the church is not interested in their problems. It is in such a context that conflicts often arise between the first and second generation of immigrants.

Immigrant Life Pressures

Some immigrants try to use of the church as a means of gaining prestige in Korean society. This may be more of an issue for people who have failed to assimilate to American culture and society. The frustration of the language barrier, the handicap of being a minority, the confusion of a life completely different from that of the homeland, the necessity of working very hard. These pressures and others combine to create an undefined consciousness of inferiority, futility, and even despair. Because of the tangle of suppressed emotions generated by such pressures, we often see strange behavior on the part of some immigrants who abandon the accepted standards of decorum of careful judgment. Especially in the church, this tendency surfaces in exaggerated form. Conflicts are expressed in bitter questions. "Who has more qualifications than I to be elected a deacon, or elder?" "Why does the church always belittle my ideas?" "The pastor doesn't listen to my ideas, but listens to other people's suggestions instead." When people's needs are not being met, feelings of deep dissatisfaction often surface.⁶ People's lack of a sense of belonging in this society and

⁶ Ibid., 91

their wrong expectation of the Church may cause them to move from one church to another frequently. Church splits may result from such complicated motives as often as for theological reasons.

Theological Controversy

Korean Immigrant church conflicts sometimes occur because neither the fundamentalists nor the liberals can recognize the diversity of faith traditions. Thus, each group tries to make absolute its tradition while criticizing others. But Jesus did not care for tradition of faith but love and forgiveness.

Many kinds of theological polarization also disturb immigrant churches: conservative versus progressive faith, mystical versus worldly faith, charismatic worship versus non-charismatic worship, salvation limited to one group versus salvation for all, etc. Each of these issues is a potential source of church conflict. Korean immigrant churches are places of conflict.

Is starting another church appropriate through if it is the result of the hurt and ill will of a church conflict? Is it really impossible for sinful human being to be reconciled? How can churches bring healing and reconciliation to people who are suffering from division and conflict? How can people live together a joyful celebration of the good news? What is a Christian definition of constructiveness in conflicts? What is a Christian vision for managing conflicts? As a soon-to-be minister, I ask such question and find the lack of answers disappointing. My goal is to help one another to be faithful, to seek to create environments in which the possibilities of reconciliation are increased.

Thesis

This project identifies the role of Korean immigrant churches in overcoming the tension and proposes a way of reconciliation and renewal for a more effective ministry not only for the second generation but also for the first generation within the Korean Methodist Church structure.

Definitions of Major Terms

Important terms used in this study are defined as follows:

Korean Immigrant Church: The Korean immigrant church is the church whose members include first generation immigrants to America and their children who were born in the United States. The service and program are focused on the Korean congregation, whether it uses Korean or English. But in this paper, primarily churches that use Korean in their main church service are viewed, along with bilingual congregations.

Culture: Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by humans as members of society.

Second Generation: In this project the term refers not only to those born in the United States, but also those born in Korea who immigrated in their early childhood. They are the ones who are the most comfortable with the English language and American culture.

Reconciliation: The definition of the word reconciliation, according to the Cambridge International Dictionary of English, is the process of making two people or

groups of people friendly again after they have argued, and also the process of making two things in agreement which seem to be opposed. In Jesus Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself/Herself, entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. I define the word reconciliation to be the act of helping people make peace when they are in trouble and conflict.

Work Previously Done in the Field

There have been many studies about Korean immigrant churches, most of which deal with church growth and Korean immigrants themselves from historical and social perspectives.

There have not been many studies that propose means of overcoming conflicts and bringing reconciliation and renewal to the Korean immigrant churches. One study that deals with the conflict of Korean immigrant churches has been submitted to the Claremont School of Theology as a Doctor of Ministry project: The Church as a Reconciling Community: Toward the Mission of Korean Immigrant Churches, by Young-Taek Han.⁷ His focus is on the role of leaders who, by acting on the basis of a new image of the church, can pursue reconciliation in times of struggle and conflict in the community.

Scope and Limitation of the Project

The purpose of this project is to analyze the conflicts of Korean churches in America, and to identify means by which the churches can overcome the conflicts. My

⁷ Young-Taek Han, The Church as a Reconciling Community: Toward the Mission of Korean Churches, D. Min. project, Claremont School of Theology, 1996 (Ann Arbor, UMI, 1996).

goal is not to propose immediate solutions, rather it is address the needs of both the present and the future. Of course, no solution can be considered permanent. The subjects for this study are all Christian, especially Methodist, Korean-Americans. Although limited by its scope and the time of research, I hope this paper can be helpful to those who are interested in the subject of minority churches

Procedure for Integration

The method of this project is a combination of academic and field study of conflict resolution. Korean Churches in the United States were selected to provide the subjects. Libraries provided access to the books for the assessment of the historical background of the Korean immigrant church in the United States. Examples of conflicts in which Korean immigrant churches have been involved will be used to highlight issues raised by the project. Similar criteria were used to select both the Korean language and bilingual churches. The pastor of each church studied gave prior approval.

Chapter Outline

In the succeeding chapters, the project is explored as follows:

Chapter 2 explores the historical background of Korean immigrants and of the Korean immigrant churches.

Chapter 3 analyzes conflicts in the Korean immigrant churches. An example of a church conflict is provided. Chapter 4 presents an interpretation of the course of conflict and suggests some practical means of conflict resolution.

Chapter 5 develops a method of renewal and reconciliation for Korean immigrant churches and proposes a role for the church as a reconciling community for the future. Moreover, it develops a new image of the church, based on theological and biblical research.

In the conclusion, a summary and final observations are given.

CHAPTER 2

The Understanding of Korean Immigrant Churches

Historical Background

We must review the history of the Korean immigrants to understand the conflicts of the Korean immigrant churches. According to Joseph H. Ryu, the history of the Korean immigration to the United States can be divided into three chronological periods. The first immigration period was the wave of pioneers (1903-1944). During this period, Korean churches first appeared in the United States. The second was the liberation period (1945-1964). The third period was the legal immigrant wave which began in 1965 and continued to the 1983.¹

1903-1944 (Germinal Stage)

The first Korean immigrants settled in Hawaii from 1903-1905. These pioneers came as a result of Korean-American trade relations to work on the Hawaiian sugar plantations.

During these years, 7,226 person (6,048 men, 637 women, and 541 children) arrived in the U.S., most of whom were agricultural workers fleeing a bad harvest in Korea. With the help of Western missionaries in Korea, they came to jobs on Hawaiian sugar plantations. About 2,000 of them later moved to the American mainland to work in railroad construction. Later, "picture bride" immigrants came to America. The Korean male laborers in Hawaii were not permitted to return to Korea to marry. They

¹ Joseph H. Ryu "Korean Immigrant Churches and the PCUSA," in Korean American Ministry, eds. Sang Hyun Lee and John V. Moore (Louisville: Presbyterian Church U. S. A., 1993), 25-26.

found that the only way to marry their brides was through “brides’ picture.” The United States permitted these “picture brides” who wanted to marry lonely Korean male laborers to come to America. An estimated 1000 “picture brides” arrived between 1910 and 1924.²

The Korean immigrant churches were founded during this era as a result of the wave of Korean immigrant laborers who came to Hawaii between 1903 and 1905. The Korean community in Hawaii grew especially through the strong leadership of Sung-Man Rhee, former President of the Republic of Korea. He formed a Korean Christian Institution in Hawaii, educated the second generation Koreans and established the Korean Christian Independent Church. It was the church, under the difficult and unusual circumstances of a new land, which played the major role in helping Korean immigrants adjust to the United States. Bong-Youn Choy comments on this important contribution of the early immigrant churches.

The Korean church in America made several important contributions during the early period. First, it was a social center and a means of cultural identification for Koreans in American. Second, the church served an educational function by teaching American-born Koreans the Korean language, history, and culture. Third, the church kept Korean nationalism alive, although some of the churches were swept into a vortex of political activities by nationalist leaders.³

Thus, according to Choy, the Korean churches served social needs in their efforts to provide a center for the preservation of Korean culture and heritage. The Korean language schools for their children, for instance, served both to maintain the

² Ryu, 6.

³ Bong-Youn Choy, Koreans in America (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1979), 263.

Korean culture and heritage by teaching the Korean language and to insure upward mobility of the second generation.

The very first Korean church in the U.S., the Korean Methodist Church of Honolulu, was established in 1903. Altogether forty-seven churches were started during this period (1903-44), thirty-nine in Hawaii and another eight on the American mainland. Except for the Korean Methodist Church of Washington, D. C., all were founded before 1925.⁴

The Korean immigrant churches founded during this era that are still functioning are: the Korean Methodist Church of Honolulu (1903), the Korean Episcopal Church of Honolulu (1905), the Korean Methodist Church of Los Angeles (1904), the Korean Methodist Church of San Francisco (1906), and the Korean Methodist Church of Oakland (1914).⁵

1945-1964 (Turning Point)

The second major period of Korean immigration to the U.S. was from 1945 to 1964. During this period, two factors opened the way for many Korean immigrants to come to the U.S. The first was Korea's liberation from Japanese rule in 1945 allowing Korean student to pursue study in the U. S. The second was the Korean War. During and after the Korean War, American families adopted large numbers of Korean orphans and many Korean women married American soldiers. Seventy-seven percent of all immigrants during this period were Korean war orphans, American GI brides,

⁴ Ryu, 25-26.

⁵ Ibid.

and students. According to U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service records, a total of 14,027 students came to the U.S.: 6,231 from 1951 to 1960 and 7,796 from 1961 to 1964.⁶

The Korean churches started during these years developed mainly in response to the needs of a growing number of Korean students. Korean churches were established in three new cities: Boston, Philadelphia, and Detroit. Korean churches were added to those already in New York, Washington, D. C., and Los Angeles.⁷

As churches grew, Korean pastors also started developing relationships with one another and formed associations with likeminded churches. Bong-Youn Choy asserts that the Korean churches played a vital role in the formation of the Korean community in America as a social, cultural, and educational center that fostered proper identity, values, and nationalism during this period.

1965-1983(Growth)

The third period in the development of Korean American churches began 1965 and continued to the 1983. Since 1965, legal immigration has been the main source of the growth of the Korean American population in the United States. This has been a time of rapid growth because in 1965 Congress amended the U.S. Immigration Nationality Act to eliminate the former quota system of racial and national preferences. The process of opening America to the Korean occurred during John F. Kennedy's

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 27.

administration with the signing of the New Immigration Act. Time magazine described the change as follows:

It was in the memory of Kennedy's urging that the United States in 1965 abandoned the quota system that for nearly half a century had preserved the overwhelming European character of the nation. The new law invited the largest wave of immigration since the turn of the century. Only this time, the newcomers who arrived were not from the old world but from the third world, especially from Asia and Latin America.⁸

The new law opened the door for any persons from any country to immigrate to the United States. Previously, the admission quota for Koreans was limited to 100 persons per year. Since the Immigration Act of 1965 was passed, Korean immigration has increased rapidly. From then on 25,000 people per year could immigrate to America from Korea, and Korean churches in America started growing as new immigrants arrived.⁹ Church membership increased as the number of Koreans increased, and as Korean churches became financially strong, they came to own church building as well. Since the 1970s, Korean pastors have built Bible institutes, colleges, and theological seminaries in order to develop their churches and denominations. With the help of American denominations, Korean pastors were also able to build many mission centers, Christian newspapers, and Christian counseling centers. As Korean churches grew strong financially, they also started helping small rural churches in Korea. The churches serve Korean immigrants as important social-service centers. Korean churches in America have been established to function as social organizations

⁸ "The Changing Face of America," Time, 8 July 1985, 26.

⁹ Ryu, 27.

that meet physical needs and provide as well as spiritual services. The main mission of the Korean church during this era has been to help immigrants take a firm root in American soil by incorporating new immigrants into the church, evangelizing unbelievers, and educating children through Korean language instruction. Many Korean pastors function as personal counselors for new immigrants. They meet new immigrant families at the airport, find them jobs, and help them settle down in the new land in various ways.

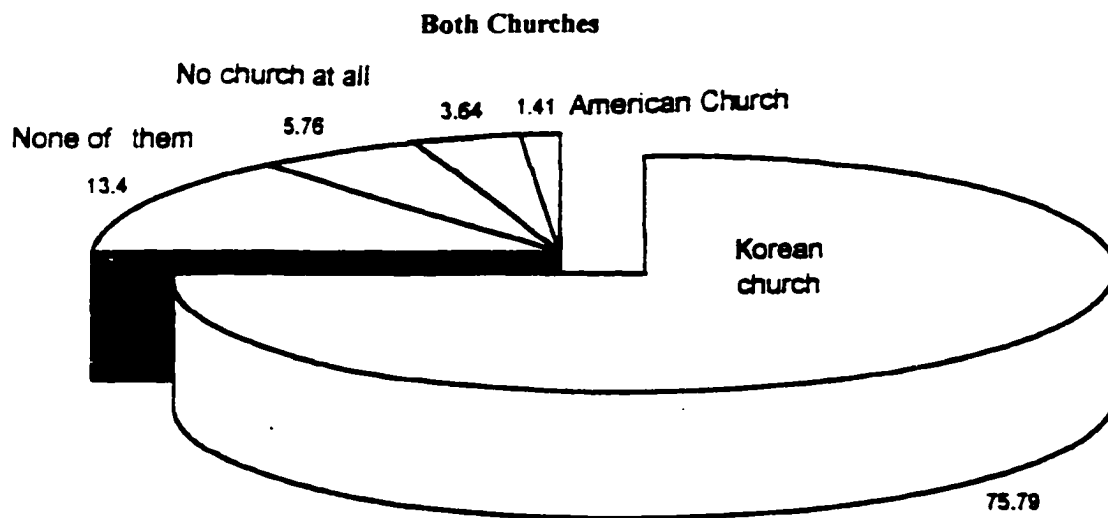
Figure 1 shows the percent age of Korean people in America attending Korean churches. According to the results of a study based on a questionnaire conducted by professor Min-Ja, Kim, 75.79 percent of the Korean people in America are attending Korean churches. This study also shows that only 1.5 percent of Korean people attend American churches in the United States.¹⁰ The rate of conversion to Christianity among the newcomers has grown from 20 to 50 percent during this period.¹¹

The percentage of Christians in the United States is greater than in Korea. In Korea, only 25 percent of the population is Christian, but in the United States, over 75 percent of the Korean population is directly or indirectly members of Korean immigrant churches.

¹⁰ Kim, 129.

¹¹ Choy, 264.

Figure 1
Percentage of Koreans Attending Church



The church plays a very significant role in immigration life. Compared with Chinese and Japanese immigrants, over 70 percent of Korean immigrants were churchgoers while 32 percent of Chinese immigrant respondents and 28 percent of Japanese immigrant respondents to a Chicago survey were churchgoers.¹²

As the center of immigrants' activities, Korean-American churches provide identity that immigrants cannot find in this society. Moreover, Korean churches in the United States tend to transplant Korean church systems to this country and repeat

¹² Won-Moo Hurh and Kwang-Chung Kim, "Religious Participation of Korean Immigrants in the United States," in Korean Immigrants in the United States (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1992), 20.

their traditional emphasis on church growth and faithful commitment to church activities. In a metropolis such as Los-Angeles, Korean-American churches expand by absorbing other church members through various evangelical meeting or extending their influence through overseas missions.¹³

Unlike those who form enclaves, some Korean-Americans dissociate themselves from other Korean-Americans. They believe that the sooner they are assimilated by the dominant culture, the better their lives will be. They tend to avoid contacting other Korean-Americans. They encourage their children to adopt the dominant social values, attitudes, and traditions as soon as possible. Korean-Americans Christians of this type usually attend non-Korean churches. Some Korean-American strive to preserve their Korean ethnic identity, on the one hand, and adopt the dominant culture, on the other. Their ideal is to sustain the Korean culture while learning from mainstream culture. Thus they live in the polarity and conflict between the two cultures.¹⁴

From the beginning of immigration to the present, Koreans are the only ethnic group that has achieved such rapid church growth in such a short period of time. As mentioned above, it is expected that there will be three thousand Korean churches by the year 2000.¹⁵ More importantly, 80 percent of Korean-American people in

¹³ Andrew Sung Park, Racial Conflict and Healing: An Asian-American Theological Perspective (New York : Orbis Book, 1996), 94.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Kim, 16.

United States are considered Christians. Figure 2 shows the number of Korean Churches in the United States as of 1997.

Figure 2

Korean Immigrant Churches in the United States

<i>Total Number of Korean Immigrant Churches : 2914</i>	
AL 29 AZ 29 CA1010 CT 11 FL 47 HI 43 IL 114 IA 8 KY 15 ML 140 MI 10 MN 7 MO 122 NE 1 NV 18 NY 35 OR 30 PA 98 SD 1 TN 22 VA 140 WA 100 OK 17 OH 35	NC 23 AK 12 AR 9 CO 37 DL 8 GA 72 IN 4 IN14 KS 21 LA 18 MA18 MI 3 ME 1 MO 122 NE 1 NJ 120 NM 7 SC 10 TX 115 UT 13 WI 9 CAN 154

Source: Korean Christian Press (Los Angeles), 1997.

Based on the above historical sketch, Joseph H. Ryu identifies two important facts regarding the Korean immigrant churches:

First, the Korean churches in the United States were developed along with the Korean communities. Korean immigrant communities in the America have developed mainly around Korean churches. After the first group of immigrants arrived in Honolulu between 1903 and 1905, Korean associations and Korean mutual aid societies grew up in every city where Koreans were living. However, the Korean churches were organized in these places before any of the association and aid groups. Thus, the Korean church became the social center of Korean community life. Second, the number of Korean immigrant churches in the U.S. has grown proportionally to the growth of the total Korean immigrant population. For Korean immigrant Christians, much more than for American Christians, their ethnic churches have been the base of very close friendships or even family relationship.¹⁶

¹⁶ Ryu, 27-28.

However, Korean immigrant churches need to move beyond their security zone. Their purpose of their being in this country is not only to have their own community but to interact with other groups for mutual enrichment.

The Present State of the Korean Immigrant Churches in America

Korean churches in America have grown rapidly as described in the previous section. They have contributed to immigrant life significantly and have become social centers for immigrants who often face problems such as language barriers, cultural differences, racial discrimination, and loneliness.

Above noted, the church has been a culturally attractive place. For both Christians and non-Christians, the church has been the only place where they can speak their own language and share their culture with one another. Churches have functioned as meeting places for ethnic communities and as centers for preserving for immigration culture and teaching the language for those who have suffered from racial and socio economic discrimination in this alien land. This has contributed to the growth of the church in the United States. There are many people who adopted the Christian faith only since coming to this country.

Such a cultural context has made the church a cultural community rather than a faith community. People often attend church with motives other than religious: to meet people socially or for business, for example. Some people try to the church structure as a means to gain prestige in the church as well as in Korean-American society. This seems more importantly for people who have failed to assimilate to American culture and society.

Church conflict often results both from such complicated motives and theological concerns. Won-Moo Hurh and Kwang-Chung Kim described the manifold role of Korean immigrant churches.

Many of the reasons for the continued strength of the Christian churches in the Korean community have not changed. They provide for many needs- religious involvement, an identity, and a resource for newly arrived immigrants. In addition, they provide a place for meeting people and a sanctuary for obtaining peace of mind and self-improvement. But there have also been some negatives- too much gossip, self-interest, schisms, and conflict, as well as the constant solicitation for money.¹⁷

Korean immigrant churches have played positive roles in the Korean community. However, they also have some negative aspects such as church conflict.

In the shadow of such remarkable growth, there has been another history of the church, that of church divisions. Church splits are a well-known phenomenon within Korean churches in America. Power struggles between pastors and elders and authoritarianism exist in Korean churches. A whole spectrum of faith can exist in one church including liberals and conservatives, charismatics and non-charismatics, and the secular and spiritual.

There are also divisions between the haves and have-not's, and the educated and the uneducated. When people do not have their needs met, they often leave and start another church. When churches divide, pastors lose spiritual authority, church members are hurt, and second generation Korean Americans are disillusioned. Of the

¹⁷ Won-Moo Hurh and Kwang-Chung Kim, Korean Immigrants in America: A Structural Analysis of Ethnic Confinement and Adaptive Adaptation (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984), 188.

2.914 Korean churches in America, many started as a result of churches dividing. While it is possible that God uses church divisions as a means of growth for Korean churches, they are nevertheless painful experiences for all those involved.

CHAPTER 3

Conflicts Inside Korean Immigrant Churches

Conflict is essential to and inevitable in human life. It is a fact that we face conflict frequently in our daily lives, whether minor or major. Conflict does not have to become violent, nor result in a court battle or a split church. Rather conflict is an inevitable part of life that enables new ideas, creativity. The issue is how to keep conflict creative rather than destructive. Regarding conflict, Donald E. Bossart notes:

Conflict fulfills an inevitable component of our personal and organizational lives. Whenever you have persons and organization with values, needs, wants, goals, and plans, there will be conflict. The issue is not, therefore, whether or not there will be differences leading to conflict, but rather how it will be utilized. Conflict must be organized and regulated for constructive use. Its presence shows that change is going on or being resisted, and change could lead to growth.¹

Conflict has the destructive power to alienate persons and groups and temporarily frustrate the functioning of the supportive fellowship in the church. But it can also be of constructive assistance in dealing with critical issues and can be a motivating source of energy for persons or groups.²

In the Korean church and community we are accustomed to handling conflict in extreme ways—we usually avoid and suppress our feelings, or explode afterward, resulting in a separation from the community and condemnation in our hearts. In this way, Korean immigrant churches has been greatly damaged by its numerous conflicts even schism. How can we deal with conflicts within Korean immigrant churches?

¹ Donald E. Bossart, Creative Conflict in Religious Education and Church Administration (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1980), 229.

² Ibid.

Korean immigrant churches gather for worship with great enthusiasm at first. However, they begin to fight and split a little later. Then the resulting splinter groups meet together, but they in turn fight, and divide. Some Koreans with negative views against Korean churches say, "Korean immigrant churches are easily split." They often say "I do not attend church because I do not want to be involved in those conflicts."³ This is a reality for Korean Christians. Why do Korean churches repeatedly fight? Chang-Wook Choi in his article, "Managing of Korean Immigrant Churches," describes three major conflicts in the Korean immigrant church.

In most churches there are three major areas of conflict. First, an individual member may have a personal objective that somehow relates to the church, but really has almost nothing to do with the church's central purposes. Second, church members bring with them certain individual expectations about what the church should be and do. Should the church plan its program only in terms of these personal expectations? Sometimes individual church members plan and even scheme to achieve their desires that are based only on their personal value judgments. Third, the church as the Body of Christ has fundamental objectives of its own that are essential to its existence and these objectives must be affirmed and strengthened. Not surprisingly there are times when the three types of objective collide with each other. Therefore when a conflict breaks out, every effort must be made to clarify the particular kinds of objectives that are involved. Even so, it is not a simple matter to bring all the concerned parties into agreement.⁴

According to Choi, Korean immigrant churches have regarded conflicts in the church as the evidence of not being blessed, if not of demon possession :

The emergence of conflict within the Korean church is a graceless witness that we should understand as the destructive work of the devil. First, this is because conflict generates rage and hostility which eat away at the maturity and dignity of the individual. Second, when there is conflict, it consumes tremendous amounts of the church's vigor and courage. Third, when conflict

³ Choi, 88.

⁴ Ibid., 89.

emerges in public there is danger that the resulting injured personal feelings will take a very long time to heal.⁵

Therefore, when conflict is recognized, it is also common for the church leaders to immediately try to establish strict control over it. We need to accept the reality that when a church has within its body various groups of people with different thought patterns, values, and cultures, it is natural for conflict to exist. Besides the interpersonal differences, the church, as church, has its own clear traditions, doctrines, and objectives for which it must stand apart from the personal preferences of its individual members. So, on either count it is almost inevitable for some degree of conflict to be chronically present in the life of most churches.⁶

A Christian ethic for managing conflicts requires trust of God because one recognizes one cannot control the parties. Managing conflicts is a process of intentionally intervening by proposing constructive processes by which to deal with differences. Rather than reacting emotionally to the issues and mobilizing politically to overcome others as "enemies," a Christian ethic prescribes how parties may adopt a process of shared control for respective self-control. Parties are helped to move from enemy making to problem solving.

There is an urgent need to see and handle conflict in a constructive and restorative process. Moreover, there is an urgent need to have practical steps for facing and solving conflict within Korean churches. To solving conflicts in the Korean

⁵ Ibid., 89-90.

⁶ Ibid.

immigrants churches, we must know conflicts inside Korean immigrants churches. In this chapter, I will analyze the conflicts of Korean immigrant churches.

Factors of Conflict in Korean Immigrant Churches

In addition to the factors that generate conflict in all churches, there are special factors that make Korean immigrant churches unusually open to conflict. Chang-Wook Choi sees conflict as a result of unavoidable circumstances.⁷

Choi attempts to classify patterns of conflicts as follows.⁸

Immigrant Life Pressures

The frustration of the language barrier, the handicap of being a minority, the confusion of a life completely different from that of the homeland, unskilled jobs, and an uncertain future often make Korean immigrants experiencing inferiority, futility and despair. Because of the tangle of suppressed emotions generated by such pressures, strange behavior appears at the edges of immigrant life in which the immigrants have dropped their normal capacity for wisdom and careful judgment.⁹

As newcomers, Korean-Americans undergo direct and indirect racism from various groups. Many Korean-American small business people in particular are affected by anti-Asian-American sentiment. For example, in August 1993, a man shot a Korean-American grocer in Washington, D.C., took a potato chip package, and walked out slowly. It was surmised that the motive was not robbery but racial hatred.

⁷ Choi, 90-91.

⁸ Ibid., 90-92.

⁹ Ibid., 91.

In the same month someone broke into a Korean-American's house in Rowland Heights, California, and left a burned swastika and racially insulting graffiti on a rug and a wall inside. About the same time, a New York policeman hurled racial epithets at a young Korean-American woman and then hit her. Her "crime" was a parking violation. In September 1993 a liquor store owner and his son in Lake Forest, New York, were beaten by six youths shouting racial epithets. In February 1992 a Korean-American youth, fourteen years old, was chased by twenty youths in the Bronx and was beaten with a baseball bat. In January 1991 Caucasian golfers in Milpitas, California, beat Korean-American golfers, shouting, "Get lost, Orientals!"¹⁰

The face of racism in the United States varies depending on the ethnic minority in question. Korean-Americans face two expressions of racism. One is racial discrimination because of their being Asian-American. The other is because of their being Korean-American. As economic hardship in this country increases, anti-Asian Americanism intensifies. Racial discrimination within the church is very serious. An example is the sharing of church buildings. Along with other Korean-American churches, a number of Korean United Methodists have a difficult time finding United Methodist churches that are willing to share their facilities with their fellow ethnic Methodist churches. Although they are appointed by the same bishop of a conference, many Korean-American pastors who start new ministries have to beg fellow Euro-

¹⁰ Park, 28-29.

American pastors to rent their buildings to their congregations. They are treated as second-class pastors.¹¹

Lack of Understanding of Church Life

An important factor that makes immigrant churches conflict-prone is that 68 percent of Korean immigrant church members have been living in the United States for less than four years.¹² Therefore, they have not become accustomed to American church life and order. New members often bring to their church only their personal wisdom, experience, and ideas. When there is a lack of aggressive new member and officer training, there is a corresponding lack of understanding of churches, order, and faith. According to Choi, this has led to the conflict: old members vs. new members, Korean traditional ways vs. Americanized ways, etc.¹³

When this occurs these individuals inevitably find themselves in tension with the older leaders and members who are accustomed to its structure. Church members who are not used to the church's traditions often advocate the methods and procedures they have learned in Korean and American secular institutions. They sometimes confuse the church with the secular setting. A lack of understanding and respect for the church has frequently resulted in abuse and hardship for the pastor and elected church officers. Power should be a means to an end, never an end in

¹¹ Ibid., 21.

¹² Choi, 91.

¹³ Ibid., 92.

itself. When power is sought it is often sought as a corrupting force and not a moral one, creating the sinful nature of humanity. This does mean avoiding power and its positive use and gain for persons and society. Conflict and reconciliation are not incompatible. Managing conflicts is a ministry of reconciliation. Not all conflict is necessary and there is need to minimize unnecessary conflict. The ministry of reconciliation, however, is for all the rich and the poor, and all must be involved in the ministry to the alienated of our society.

Theological Controversy

Theological polarization also disturbs immigrant churches: conservative faith vs. progressive faith, mystical faith vs. worldly faith, charismatic worship vs. non-charismatic worship, the Holy Spirit of fire vs. the Holy Spirit of water, the pure gospel vs. the false gospel, salvation for the world vs. salvation for our group alone, etc. Each of these issues is a potential source of church conflict, although usually this kind of conflict really revolves around the pastor's personal views.

Polarity in faith patterns is one causes of conflicts. It is also true that most church problems have their roots in the everyday life of faith rather than strictly theological questions. Wherever the roots may lie, this kind of conflict has resulted in much bitterness in many churches.

In terms of differences of faith, Paul Mickey and Robert Wilson, in their book,

Conflict Resolution, observe:

Responding to faith difference can move along a continuum from open antagonism to a positive change of attitude on our part. Handling such

differences requires a sensitive awareness of them and assurance that differences do have integrity.¹⁴

They explain that conflict due to difference enables us to move beyond apathy, complacency, and feelings of powerlessness, and brings a focus to specific issues that allows us to enter into negotiation and ultimately toward resolution and reconciliation.¹⁵ The church needs to accept that we humans have the capacity both for hostility toward each other as well as toward God. The church could be the place, indeed needs to be the place for acceptance of hostility.

Social Stratification

Within many Korean churches there is also a divisive consciousness of largely invisible status levels. People from Korea "Region A" look down on people from "Region B," educated members feel superior to uneducated members, the economic "haves" are embarrassed by the sad plight of the "have-nots," the lower classes resent the upper classes, laborers do not understand professionals, the young think the elderly are old fashioned, etc.

Church people of the same belonging category easily associate together into informal group for themselves. Such group formation is often a prelude to various kinds of confrontation. There is invisible class consciousness inside the Korean immigrant churches. Korean-Americans live as second-class citizens in the United

¹⁴ Paul A. Mickey and Robert L. Wilson, Conflict Resolution (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973), 56-57.

¹⁵ Ibid., 31-33.

States. Andrew-Sung Park analyzes social conflicts of Korean-American in the United States.

The dominant groups in this country often remind them of their inferiority. They do not treat Korean-Americans as fully equal with them; something is missing in the Korean-American and Asian-American face, appearance, speech, behavior, thinking, and working. Even though Korean-Americans succeed in their careers or business, they feel left out of society and thus feel failure. The negative projection of the dominant group toward them by internalizing, they feel a certain social stratification between their own values, behavior, and identity and the dominant group's values, behavior, and identity. When they realize that the dominant group will never fully accept them, they experience marginality. Their marginal situation creates anxiety, confusion and insecurity.¹⁶

Problems of social stratification have caused conflicts and disunity in the Korean immigrant church.

Conflicts Between the First Generation and the Second Generation

Church Division. Another aspect of conflict is that which occurs between first generation and second generation. The Korean immigrant church functions not only as a religious institution but is a resource for the Korean immigrants, supplying their cultural, social and political needs. This is why the church tends to be more traditionally Korean and the first generation sticks together. They have a similar interest in keeping their traditional values.

Won-Moo Hurh, a sociology professor at Western Illinois University, developed a model for categorizing Korean immigrants. His article, "Toward a Korean-American Ethnicity," illustrated the Korean American's ethnic identity process. The following chart gives a typology of Koreans in the United States.

¹⁶ Park, 40.

Figure 3

A Typology of First Generation Korean Americans.

	<u>Degree of Cultural assimilation</u>		
		<i>High</i>	<i>low</i>
Ethnic Identity	High	Pluralist	traditionalist
Koreanism	Low	Integrationist	Isolationist

Source: Won-Moo Hurh, "Toward a Korean-American Ethnicity"

This typology was developed based on two variables: ethnic identity (Koreanism) and cultural assimilation (Americanization).

Hurh identifies four types of first generation Korean immigrants according to the degree of assimilation between the Korean culture and the American culture :

1. The traditionalist who is more Korean than American.
2. The integrationist who is still Korean but tries to become more Americanized
3. The isolationist who is neither Korean nor American.
4. The pluralist who is both Korean and American.¹⁷

This results in indifference and apathy on the part of the second generation who feel the church is not interested in youth and their problems. The church was founded by the first generation and the first generation is intolerant of the young American-born Koreans. Most Korean churches in America are first generation centered and use the Korean language in their ministry and administration.

¹⁷ Won -Moo Hurh, "Toward a Korean-American Ethnicity: Some Theoretical Models," Ethnic and Racial Studies, 3 (1980): 463.

Second generation Koreans, even if they have been under the strong cultural influence of first generation, feel alienated from the church due to their different world view. They have a Western world view while the parent generation belongs exclusively to the Korean world view. Korean-American young people are thus caught between two strong cultural forces which are not only different but also contradictory to each other.

The difference in values, beliefs and attitudes as well as the view of the church stemming from these two divergent world views can become a source of disagreement, misunderstanding and conflicts. Exposure to American culture causes Korean children to be much more American in their life style. As the children attend school and make friends, they begin adopting American customs, speech patterns, dress, etc. In fact, the children often look down on their parents for speaking broken English and acting "old fashioned." They cannot easily identify with their parents or the Korean community.

While 77.5 percent of the young people in another recent study felt grateful to their parents for their hard work in providing a good material life for their families, it was found that most Korean American parents worry too much about their children and trust them too little. Korean adults do not understand the difficulties their children face in school and the children resent the way their parents constantly compare them with the children of other Korean families.¹⁸

¹⁸ Young Pai, "A Sociocultural Understanding of Korean American Youth 'Caught in the Web,'" in Korean American Ministry, eds. Sang Hyun Lee and John V. Moore (Louisville: Presbyterian Church U.S.A., 1993), 260.

Young Pai in his article, "A Sociocultural Understanding of Korean American Youth 'Caught in the Web'" highlights the problem:

Eighty-nine percent of the Korean young people polled believed that making their own decisions was "quite important" or "at the top of their list." Half of them believed that the parenting style of their mothers and fathers alternated too much between authoritarian and permissive styles. This contradictory practice points up a significant area of conflict for families that attach central importance to developing attitudes of conformity and docility in their children.¹⁹

It is natural that most children have frequent conflicts with their parents, but the degree of conflict between Korean youth and their parents may be unusually severe. Another clue to the attitudes of youth is the high proportion of Korean American young people who wish they had different parents. According to the Search Institute,²⁰ five percent of American white youth and nine percent of black youth, reported that they "often" or "very often" wished they had different parents. On the other hand, 15.5 percent of the Korean youth gave similar responses. Thus, more than three times as many Korean American youth as white youth often wished they had different parents.

Korean parental demands for conformity and docility are inconsistent with the male sex roles Korean culture assigns to boys, hence generating more conflict for them. On the other hand, the same parental expectations of conformity reinforce

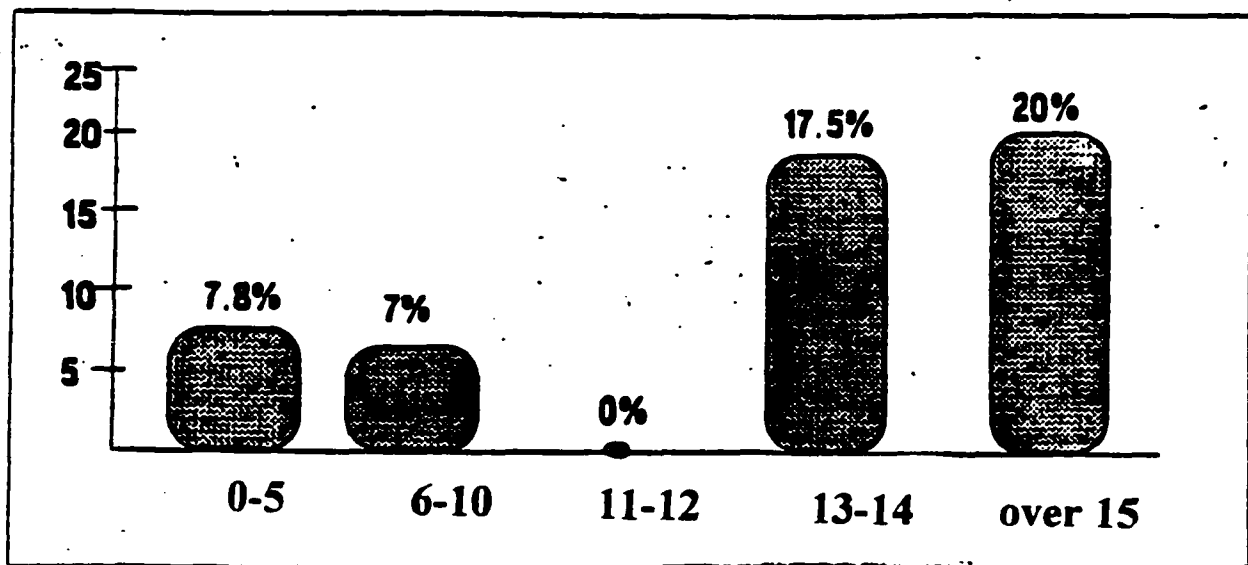
¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid. This is the report of a national study of 7,000 American early adolescents and their parents from twelve Protestant denominations.

female sex stereotyping because they are consistent with culturally assigned female sex roles.²¹

Figure 4

Youth wishing they had different parents according to immigration age



49 percent of Korean youth attending Korean Immigrant Churches have experienced church schism. As noted above many of the 2914 Korean Churches in America started as a result of churches dividing. One church that arose from a church split made headlines the following week in the local paper with the headline: "By God's Will We Have Started a Brand New Church."

Though God may use church divisions as a means of growth for Korean churches, they are still painful experiences for all involved. The following table,

²¹ Pai, 261.

provided by Suk-Whan Oh, a youth pastor for the second generation, shows how often Korean youth experienced church splits during their teens years.²²

Figure 5

Experience of Church Schism during the Teen Year (7-12th)

none	1 time	2 times	3 times	4 times	5 times	over 6times
51 %	24%	12%	7%	4%	1%	2%

When churches divide, church members are hurt, and second generation Korean American are disillusioned by the church's strife and divisions.

Cultural Conflicts of Second Generation . The growth and split of the Korean church coupled with the normal problem of adolescence has caused serious problems among Korean youth. They are suffering from an identity crisis. To find themselves, they may totally reject the Korean way and isolate themselves from both culture and from their families. They are trying to find their own self-image in the middle of a struggle. Their Korean-American ethnic identity is an inherited identity. It is not a chosen, but a given identity. The parents of Korean youth often push the young people to be more Korean in their attitudes and beliefs, while their schools and Korean and Caucasian peers urge them to become more American. The result is an identity crisis for Korean young people because of their bilingual, bicultural environment. They must adjust to a new culture as well as struggle with the normal crises of adolescence. First generation

²² Suk-Whan Oh, "50 % of Korean Youth Have Experienced Church Schism," Korean Christian Press, 19 Aug. 1995, 4.

Korean-Americans who have lived in this country for a long time usually undergo an identity crisis, especially if they return to visit Korea. They realize that they are neither fully Koreans nor fully Americans. And most second-generation Korean-Americans experience role confusion at home, in schools, and in society. According to Erik Erikson, it is not sum of childhood identification, but rather a new combination of old and new identification fragments. Erikson states:

The process of identity formation emerges as an evolving configuration-a configuration which is gradually established by successive ego syntheses and resyntheses throughout childhood. It is a configuration gradually integrating constitutional givens, idiosyncratic needs, favored capacities, significant identifications, effective defenses, successful sublimations, and consistent roles.²³

He point out that adolescents can be strongly clannish and cruel in their exclusion of those who are unlike them in skin color, cultural background, tastes, and habits. Thus many Korean-American suffer feelings of exclusion and the loss of self-identity. The consistent roles Erikson speaks of are ambiguous for Korean youth in American culture caught between the role models of their parents' culture and those of their new culture. As they learn to speak English and behave according to the expectations of peers and teachers, children of Korean immigrant parents encounter a serious conflicts between his childhood identity and the new culture. The loss of self-identity results in role-confusion, a sense of inauthenticity and feelings of shame and worthlessness. Paul Tillich who has identified himself as a man on the boundary, explains this tension as follows:

²³ Erik H. Erikson, Identity, Youth and Crisis (New York: Norton, 1968), 163.

The boundary is the best place for acquiring knowledge. When I was asked to give an account of the way my ideas have developed from my life, I thought that the concept of the boundary might be the fitting symbol for the whole of my personal and intellectual development. I have had to stand between alternative possibilities of existence, to be completely at home in neither and to take no definitive stand against either. Since thinking presupposes receptiveness to new possibilities, this position is fruitful for thought; but it is difficult and dangerous in life, which again and again demands decision and thus exclusion of alternatives.²⁴

Paul Tillich talks about moving beyond the boundary and encountering the Eternal that transcends all human possibilities. Life on the boundary is the life of eternal striving. Korean-Americans are alienated both from the mainstream society and the Korean church as well as being physically marginal, a position which is difficult and dangerous. Conflicts and confusions result from ignoring what is imbedded in their life in-between.

The increasing presence of the younger, second and third generation Korean-Americans in the church, raised a crucial issue of the relevancy of its present form of ministry. In terms of worship service, the second generation finds Korean language worship service boring because they do not adequately understand the language. The pattern of worship strictly follows that which the first generation is accustomed to. This does not appeal to the second generation. Even if the service is conducted in the English language, the context is not quite one in which the second generation can feel free to worship God and enjoy fellowship.

Some of the church leaders are concerned that the second generation might become too Americanized and end up leaving the church in several years. Therefore,

²⁴ Paul Tillich, On the Boundary (New York: Scribner's, 1966), 2.

they encourage the youth directors and Sunday school teachers to teach them in strict Korean ways, so that they might retain the Korean way of worshipping as well as the Korean language. This would result in a worse situation than before. As a result, they continue to be isolated from American society and tend to keep their traditional church activities such as revival meeting, all night prayer meetings and early morning prayer. The traditional church life is full of prayer with much expression of emotions. The first generation is trying to deliver this kind of attitude to the second generation.

The Korean-American second generation belongs exclusively to the Western worldview while the parent generation belongs exclusively to the Korean worldview. Today, the church still occupies an important place in our young people's lives. Pastors and youth directors and parents can work together to form a supportive relationship. The church leader and parents must listen to them, try to understand their life style and recognize their value system. The gospel must relate to their life style and the ministry must be carried out to meet their relevant needs. They can develop programs which can help youth of the second and third generation in their spiritual development to have identity.

Jesus was a marginal person who lived on the boundary between humanity and God. Jesus was broken to actualize the meaning and positive potentiality imbedded in his marginal life, and opened the way to a new life and salvation for all humanity. H. Richard Niebuhr, who was himself a second generation immigrant, comments in The Meaning of Revelation about the meaning of the marginal life of Jesus for all humanity:

Jesus Christ is not only the Jew who suffered for the sins of Jews and so for our own sins. He is the man through whom the whole of human history becomes our history. Now, there is nothing that alien to us. All the struggles, searching after light, all the wanderings of all the peoples, all the sins of men in all places become parts of our past through Him. Through Christ we become immigrants into the empire of God which extends over all the world and learn to remember the history of that empire, that is of men in all times and places, as our history.²⁵

What is common in the life of Moses, Esther, and Daniel is that they are insiders who function as outsiders. Moses who was an insider as a prince in an Egyptian palace, opted to be an outsider to respond to God's calling. And he moved into the wilderness. Esther who became an insider as a queen, has risked to be an outsider to save Jews from possible persecution. Daniel who made into the structure and became insider lived and functioned as an outsider.

The church is a community of people who realize their life in-between as a gift from God. Even if their lives still have pain, they are inspired by each other and by the Holy Spirit to keep their identity as the people in-between.

Case Study: Conflicts inside the Korean United Methodist Church

In Philadelphia during the 1990s there have been many local Korean immigrant churches whose theological background is fundamentalist and who experienced schism in the 1990s. The reasons for these schisms are often complicated including personal and cultural factors as well as theological ones. I served in one such church as a Bible teacher, a small, twelve year old United Methodist Church with about eighty adults and thirty young people attending on Sunday. The denominational background of the

²⁵ H. Richard Niebuhr, The Meaning of Revelation (New York: Macmillan, 1941), 116.

congregation was diverse: some were from Presbyterian and other denominations, some from Methodist traditions.

Some of them only became Christians after they came to the United States. The result was two different groups of people with different understanding of their faith : spiritual fundamentalists and liberals. One group of people was from the lower class economically. Most of them lived around the church in urban areas. They were theologically fundamentalists. Their faith led them to make commitments to the church. For them, there could not be any compromise of faith with worldly life. In general this group attended almost every official gathering and service in the church. They were also very supportive of the pastor's ministry who was himself very evangelical.

However, the other group of people was less conservative. Though smaller numerically this group held more power in the church because it included most of the church's founding members. They were generally upper middle class and lived in the suburbs. They seemed less committed to the church and compared to the first group and were very critical and unsupportive of the pastor.

The problems in the church began when the Board of Administration decided to elect one more lay elder in memory of the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the church. There were already four lay elders with two representing each group. At a meeting of the lay elders, the pastor recommended a church member as a candidate for the position. The liberal group tried to block his election on the grounds that he was unqualified for the position. The real reason for opposing him, however, was that they

thought that if he were elected he would not cooperate with them and the power balance among elders would shift. This was especially critical since they were hoping to have the pastor removed.

The struggle over the election continued for some time. When the pastor finally decided to leave this church for another parish after serving his seven year term, the conservative group also decided to leave and begin another church. The apparent motive for their leaving was to establish a church that could serve the community more effectively. However, the more likely cause was because of a crack in the relationship between the two groups throughout the struggles.

The animosity between the two groups was great. The people who decided to leave the church would not talk to the other group. Neither group was willing to make concessions to the other for the sake of the unity of the church. Even the pastor did not attempt to reconcile the two groups because he himself was involved in the fight. Eventually, a majority of the members left the church. The group that left blamed the other group for ill-treatment of the pastor and authoritarianism. The group that stayed accused the first group of splitting. They said that the people leaving were not church-centered but pastor-centered. In addition to the conflicts due to different theological positions, the schism in the church resulted in the breakdown of the relationships among the people within the small congregation. The struggle for hegemony in the church was another reason for the schism.

Those who left did not cancel the candidacy for the election before the battle started. Those who remained did not want to lose their power in the church. No one

would sacrifice his/her personal concerns for the sake of unity. No one tried to improve the relationship among people at any expense of dogma or hegemony. No one had the courage to act in faith and try to mediate between the two groups. No one would abandon their pride or self-righteousness though he or she might have known the scripture: “ For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” ²⁶

Part of reason for the split in this church was because neither the fundamentalists nor the liberals could accept diversity of faith traditions. Thus, each group tried to make its beliefs absolute while criticizing those of the other group. They could not simply accept people as they were. But I am convinced that what Jesus really cared for was not a person’s beliefs but love and forgiveness. Love, forgiveness and acceptance take precedence over doctrine if a church is really an assembly of people who believe in, and follow, Jesus. To put it another way, nothing should be more important in the formulation of doctrine than those principles. The primary purpose of community organization is to help individuals develop and use the resources God has given them, enabling the individual to control his/her own destiny and the destiny of the community.

The unique task of the church is to add to process of the dimension of love, justice, redemption, reconciliation, mercy, and the judgment of God. ²⁷

²⁶ Luke. 14:11. All scripture references are from the Revised Standard Version.

²⁷ Lyle Schaller, Community Organization: Conflict and Reconciliation (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 132-38.

Conflict and reconciliation are not incompatible. Thus, if anyone argues that he or she cannot get along with someone because of different faith style or doctrinal difference, his or her attitude is invalid because of its inconsistency with the spirit of Jesus' life. If anyone insists that he or she should leave to start another church to keep doctrinal purity, that person is just revealing his or her lack of love, forgiveness and acceptance.

The United Methodist Church : Unity Rather Than Doctrine

The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church defines the church as follows:

A local Church is a community of all true believers under the Lordship of Christ. It is the redemptive fellowship in which the Word of God is preached by persons divinely called and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's own appointment. Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit, the church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers, and the redemption of the world.²⁸

In the United Methodist Church, the unity of the church is considered the first priority. John Wesley thought of his fellows not as constituting a new church but simply as forming small group movements within the church of England from the beginning period of Methodism. Even after his followers had already left the Church of England he remained, asserting as follows;

If any member of the Church does divide from or leave Church, he hath no more place among us.²⁹

²⁸ United Methodist Church (U.S.), The Book of Discipline, 1996 ed. (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1996), par. 202.

²⁹ Quoted in Albert C. Outler, ed. John Wesley (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 418.

Despite its tradition in the central stream of Christian spirituality and doctrine, one of the most important characteristics in the Wesley tradition is its emphasis on practical divinity- -the experiential realization of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the lives of Christian people. While United Methodists hold to certain religious affirmations, grounded in the gospel and confirmed in their experience, they also recognize the right of Christians to disagree on matters such as forms of worship, structure of church government, modes of baptism, or theological explorations.

They believe such differences do not break the bond of fellowship that ties Christians together in Jesus Christ. Wesley's familiar dictum was, "As to all opinions which do not strike at the root of Christianity, we think and let think"³⁰

John Wesley and George Whitefield were good friends in their earlier years, Wesley having begun his outdoor preaching ministry at Whitefield's encouragement. As time went on the men disagreed, with Whitefield leaning more heavily toward Calvinism than toward his younger friend's Arminianism. When Whitefield died, Wesley was asked if he expected to see Dr. Whitefield in heaven. In exaggerated but honest respect he answered, No, he will be so near the throne of God that men like me will never even get a glimpse of him ! : Though differing, they did not lose their sense of oneness in Christ.³¹

The United Methodists respect the diversity of opinions on faith or truth-claim.

Wesley followed a time-tested approach:

In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, charity. The spirit of charity takes into consideration the limits of human understanding. "To be ignorant of many things and to be mistaken in some," Wesley

³⁰ UMC, Book of Discipline, par. 61.

³¹ Leslie B. Flynn, Great Church Fights (Wheaton, Ill: Victor Books, 1976), 44.

observed, “Is the necessary condition of humanity. The crucial matter in religion is steadfast love for God and neighbor, empowered by the redeeming and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.”³²

Methodists are not a narrow exclusivity. Methodists do not espouse narrow exclusivity but in a universal spirit believe that every human being is given God’s prevenient grace leading to salvation by faith in Christ. The Methodist Church also seeks an inclusiveness in its all policy and administration. Any church schism based on doctrinal purity is anti-Methodist and anti-Christ in the United Methodist Church.

Unfortunately, there were not many people in my church who were aware of the theological foundation of the United Methodist Church. The people who came from a Presbyterian background in particular might not have understood it. Nevertheless, those who had been in the Methodist Church in Korea should have known the Methodist Church’s tradition of church unity in Korea. In the early period of the American missionary effort, there were two Korean Methodist Churches, one Methodist, the other Southern Methodist. The Southern Methodists had their first annual conference in 1897, the Methodists in 1904.³³

The two denominations established a theological school in Seoul together: evidence that there was no serious theological difference between them. However, due to diverging mission strategies, they divided the providence to propagate the gospel in

³² UMC, Book of Discipline, par. 61.

³³ Kyung-Bai Min, Han Kuk Ki Dok Kyu Hae Sa, [Korean Church history] (Seoul: Korean Society of Christian Literature, 1987), 419-23.

1909.³⁴ Eventually, the two Korean Methodist churches united in 1930 as a result of efforts, especially of lay people. This union thus took place even before that of the Methodist churches in the United States.³⁵ It was an epoch-making event in Korean Church history. The division created by the American missionaries was overcome. At the General Assembly called to ratify the union, Bishop H. Welch encouraged the Korean Methodist Church to reject any denomination, divisiveness or authoritarianism and emphasize respect and love in the church.³⁶

However, the church that I attended in Philadelphia did not embrace unity, perhaps because of its mixed denominational background as well as its cultural situation as an immigration church. In Korean-American society, churches tend to emphasize ethnic uniqueness rather than their denominational uniqueness. For example, when most Korean-American people name their church they say the “Korean Church” or “First Church” instead of “United Methodist Church” or the “First Korean United Methodist Church.” Korean-American people are thus less interested in the denominational identity of their churches. And, since my church seldom offered programs to teach people about the Methodist tradition, many were unaware of the Wesleyan spirit of church unity, and it did not thus help to resolve the struggle in my church.

³⁴ Ibid., 149-56.

³⁵ UMC, Book of Discipline, 17.

³⁶ Min, 421.

The Ministry of the Korean Church Overcoming Conflicts

In order for the worship experience to be integral, following factors must be incorporated in the worship experience; coherency, spontaneity, and relevancy. All parts of worship should be connected to one another in a meaningful way. Not only scripture and sermon, but also music, prayer, offertory and greeting should altogether resonate with a certain theme regarding healing. A worship service should not be a collection of broken pieces that do not speak to one another. Only when coherency is preserved, worship can be meaningful and experiential. If the worship experience is to be meaningful for all the participants, spontaneity should be incorporated. The worship should be flexible enough to embrace spontaneity as long as it does not harm the coherency of the total worship experience. All worship elements should be relevant to the symbols of the particular culture of the congregation. When the worship is coherent, spontaneous and relevant, it can be transforming and incorporating. To worship is to be nurtured in the spirit of a gathered community, to experience unity in the power of God, and to be challenged by the common mission of the worshipping community.

Through sharing, mutual caring and nurturing, the members can experience the body of Christ. The church can be a place in which they share common struggles and pains: the crisis of identity and relevancy. Through education, the members of the church are informed of their identity, socio-historical context and other related issues pertinent to the mission and ministry of the church to overcome conflicts in the Korean immigrant churches.

CHAPTER 4

The Understanding of Conflict

This chapter will concentrate first on theories of conflict resolution. In addition, this chapter also proposes practical steps for conflict resolution. We must recognize why a conflict occurs, identify barriers to its resolution, and indicate a procedure to manage or resolve the conflict.

The history of mankind is a history of constant struggle. Men and women build up and destroy, feed and are fed, rise and fall. From time to time the human race makes some upward progress and some of this progress can be attributed to creatively managed conflict.

We can interpret conflict in the Korean immigrant church in two ways. On the negative side, internally it always makes the church uneasy and externally it “turns off” interested unbelievers who might otherwise be open to Christians witness. However, on the positive side if we resolve to think creatively about conflict, we can see ways in which it contributes to constructive growth and solid harmony.¹

Conflict, in any of the three forms below, is either negatively managed or positively utilized. Conflict takes three forms:

1. Intrapersonal - I want to change, but then I’m satisfied with the way I am ;
the shoulds vs. the wants; self-actualization vs. status quo.
2. Interpersonal - the projection of our intrapersonal ambivalence of values
onto others with the resultant dissatisfaction and frustration.

¹ Choi, 90.

3. Intergroup - the working out of the preceding dynamics in the midst of loose or formal group structures ; group or systems relating to other groups or systems. ²

A creative solution to conflict becomes possible when both sides respect each other; when they believe that working together for a solution is better than fighting; when they can affirm each other's ideas, opinions, and value judgments; and especially when they can accept the vision that conflict itself has a constructive side. If they do not want to understand each other's point of view, and they want only to reinforce their own positions, then conflict will bring only negative results.

Conflict situations are situations in which interpersonal concerns appear to be incompatible. In such a situation, we can describe a person's behavior along two dimensions: The dimension of assertiveness and the dimension of cooperativeness.³ These two basic dimensions of behavior can be used to define five specific methods of dealing with conflicts.

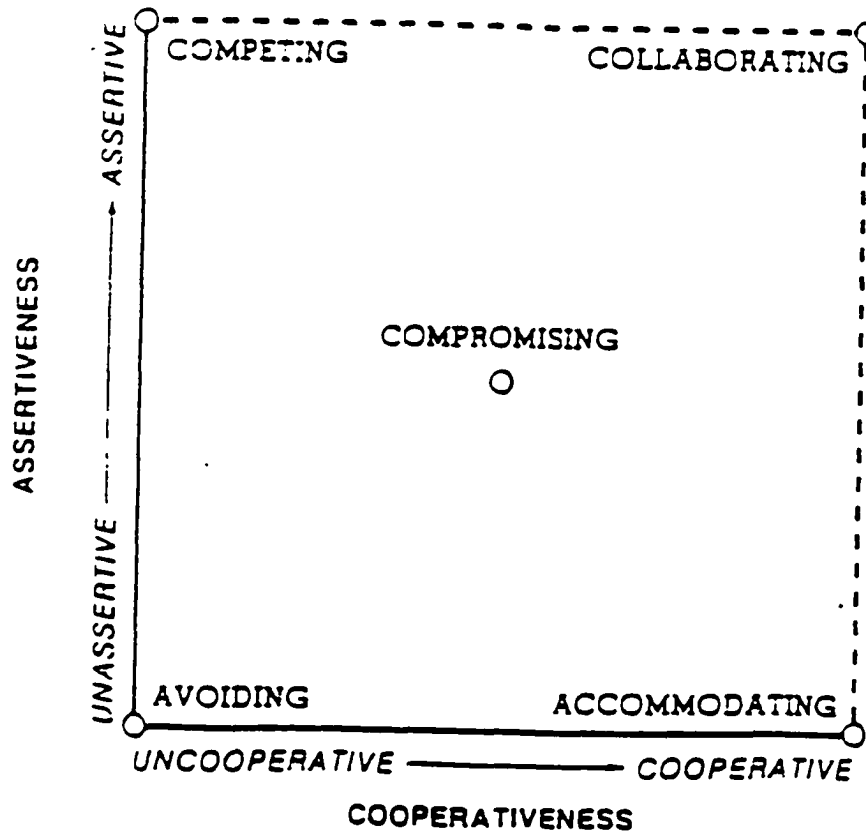
Assertiveness is the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy his/her own concerns, and Cooperativeness is the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy the other person's concern

² Bossart, 10.

³ Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilman, Thomas-Kilman Conflict Mode Instrument (New York: XICOM, 1974), 9.

Figure 6

Two Dimensions of Behavior



Jay Hall, in his survey, categorizes five types of conflict and five approaches to dealing with conflict.⁴

The 9/1 Win-Lose Style (Competing)

Competition is assertive and uncooperative. The primary concern of this style is personal goals. People whose dominant styles utilize the 9/1 strategy tend to see only one of two possible outcome to a conflict situation-winning and losing. The

⁴ Jay Hall, Conflict Management Survey (Woodlands, Tex.: Teleometrics International, 1986), 16.

contending parties think that the objectives they want are so important that they are willing to risk damaging their human relations with each other to achieve it. In such a case there must be a clear-cut decision about whether Party A or Party B gets what they want. Indeed, social survival is at stake and individual who favors this approach typically seek to win at any cost. The relationship in this style is usually not considered until after the personal goals have been achieved. To the 9/1 win lose style, personal success and benefit are vital and not negotiable. People who are competitive in conflict are usually aggressive. Suppression and coercion are their common means of handling others, and the protection of personal goals is taken as an index of successful combat.⁵ The result is inflexibility in conflict resolution.

This is a power-oriented approach. Competing may mean standing up for one's rights, defending a position which one believes is correct.⁶ This approach does not look for ways to discover a practical solution, but is eager only to attain its objectives unconditionally. In this approach, human relations are unimportant until the desired objectives are achieved.

Conflicts in Korean immigrant churches are largely of this type. The church in its doctrine teaches love, mutual toleration, and respect for personality. Yet in practice, when confrontations occur, Christian principles offer little restraint. The competing sides use every available weapon, including deceit, to attain their goals.

⁵ Ibid., 16.

⁶ Thomas and Kilman, 10.

This approach frequently creates a scandal laced as it is with personal attacks and other sordid methods seldom seen even in non-Christian society. As a result, permanent enemies are made and human relationships are broken often irreparably. This win-lose style of conflict runs the risk of radically lowering the level of interpersonal culture of a whole church community.⁷

The 1/9 Yield Lose-Style (Accommodating)

This style is unassertive and cooperative. It is the opposite of competing. It is not assertive in attaining goals. The primary concern of this style is the well-being and durability of a relationship. This concern, however, is based on the assumption that human relationships are very fragile, and they cannot endure the trauma of working through genuine differences.⁸ In the accommodation approach to conflict resolution, Party A concludes that if the unlimited pursuit of their objectives will disrupt their personal relationships with Party B and they must choose between objectives and relationships, then they must make judicious concessions to maintain the relationships. Groups that choose this approach believe that maintaining good interpersonal and inter-group relations is of supreme importance.

In Korean Churches there are many examples of this kind of accommodation. The members believe that it is more important for a group to maintain the peaceful atmosphere of the church than to force some personal or group objective on another group. In spite of the undisputed value of community harmony, the accommodation

⁷ Choi, 95.

⁸ Hall, 16.

approach frequently results in the dilution or abandonment of clearly worthwhile church goals.

The 1/9 style reveals a person's urgent need for affiliation and acceptance. It is a style that seeks to appease others by ignoring, denying, and avoiding conflict. If differences persist, giving in to the other person's goals is the effective way of protecting the relationship. The 1/9 style is a hesitant, timorous attitude to handling differences. In fact, it is a kind of false cooperation and feigned agreement. It is characterized by forced, cheerful compliance. Since personal objectives are set aside by the person using this style, the relationship could easily become one-sided.⁹ Those pursuing this method must rely on to survive conflicts.

The 1/1 Lose-Leave Style (Avoiding)

Avoiding is unassertive and uncooperative. Hopelessness is the central feature of this style. It is designed to protect the individual from the useless and punishing experience of being caught up in endless struggles which cannot be won. The 1/1 strategy is frustrated by endless struggles involved in conflict. They conclude that they cannot accomplish their objectives through fights because it shatters their human relationships. Therefore, they abandon their objectives and determine to do whatever is necessary to get out of the dispute. One who uses this style becomes a withdrawn, detached observer and is willing to sacrifice his personal goals as well as any positive contribution to the relationship in return for noninvolvement. This style is often a refuge for people who have previously placed unsuccessful faith in either the

⁹ Ibid, 16-17.

9/1 or 1/9 strategies; this style results in compliance without commitment and a feeling of frustration and hostility on the part of its user.¹⁰

In Korean immigrant churches there are many people who favor the avoidance approach because Korean culture idealizes harmony and teaches that it is always good to avoid fighting. Most people even feel that avoiding conflict is one of the noble virtues. Most church members favor a policy that regards unconditional peace as a virtue. Instead of working for a long term solution that deals with the actual roots of the conflict, they are willing to vote for peace at any price. Such shortsighted tactics frequently result in a superficial solution that only hides the real cause of conflict and leaves an ongoing struggle festering underneath.¹¹

The 1/1 lose-leave style offers a false freedom. It contributes nothing to conflict resolution. It merely postpones dealing with conflict and allows it to worsen. It is important to note that the action of withdrawing from a threatening situation may be depriving the individual of opportunities for important personal growth.

The 5/5 Compromising Style (Compromising)

Compromising is the goal of people who realize that in a serious dispute neither the changes they want nor good human relations are completely and perfectly possible. This style is intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperation and understands that in conflict you “Win a little, lose a little”. Through persuasive and manipulative skill, the 5/5 style attempts to soften the effects of losing by limiting the

¹⁰ Hall, 17.

¹¹ Choi, 96.

gains. They envision a type of give and take solution to the problem at hand. The way of compromise is seemingly harmonious and theoretically settles the dispute. This style is true of American Church. Yet compromise is seldom free from an unpleasant and bothersome aftertaste that is unappealing to Koreans.¹²

The problem with compromise for Korean groups is that it points out too clearly how much each side must concede and it requires each opponent to appreciate the degree to which the opposing side has made concessions. The parties are too conscious of the loss of both their objectives and their dignity. The 5/5 strategy is often used by people who believe the ends justify the means. The essential achievement of 5/5 style is that requires people in conflict to work with each other in order to attain the result.¹³

Sometimes, a climate of suspicion and value confusion may arise among parties in the conflict. The 5/5 style addresses an issue more directly than avoidance, but does not explore it in as much depth as collaborating. Compromising might mean splitting the difference, exchanging concessions, or seeking a quick middle-ground position. Korean churches have not been able to use this approach.

The 9/9 Synergistic Style (Collaborating)

Collaborating is both assertive and cooperative. By far the most positive way to deal with conflict is a “You win-I win” approach that takes seriously both parties’

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Hall, 17.

objectives for change and their concern for good human relationships. This style seeks a third road which favors neither party over the other and tries to devise a way to accomplish the objectives of both.

Differences are seen as symptoms of incomplete understanding and less than acceptable levels of commitment on the part of those comprising a relationship. This style assumes that working through differences will lead to more creative solutions. A toleration for differences and the recognition that feeling are legitimate are essential elements of the strategy.

This style recognizes differences and allows the participants to search together for a more creative way that will provide a mutually agreeable dignity. This processing requires much patience, the parties must trust each other, must be mutually open, and use special wisdom and insight in solving problems. Hidden agendas are not encouraged in this approach- such agendas are coaxed into the open so they may be dealt with and the relationship may actually be strengthened as a result. Furthermore, collaborating involves an attempt to work with the person to find some solution that fully satisfies the concerns of both persons. This style requires delving into an issue to identify the underlying concerns of the two individual and to find an alternative that meets both sets of concerns.¹⁴

Neither the Korean immigrant church nor the American church can claim a history of using this intelligent technique. In spite of its elusiveness, there is no better method. Table 1 summarizes the five approaches. Though number 5 is often the best,

¹⁴ Ibid.

we have to recognize that in many conflicts, this kind of ideal approach does not always solve the problem.

Whoever the parties concerned may be, in a given conflict the parties involved must choose for themselves among the five approaches according to the specific nature of the conflict, its possibilities for solution, and its background.¹⁵

Figure 7

Varied Approaches to Conflict Resolution

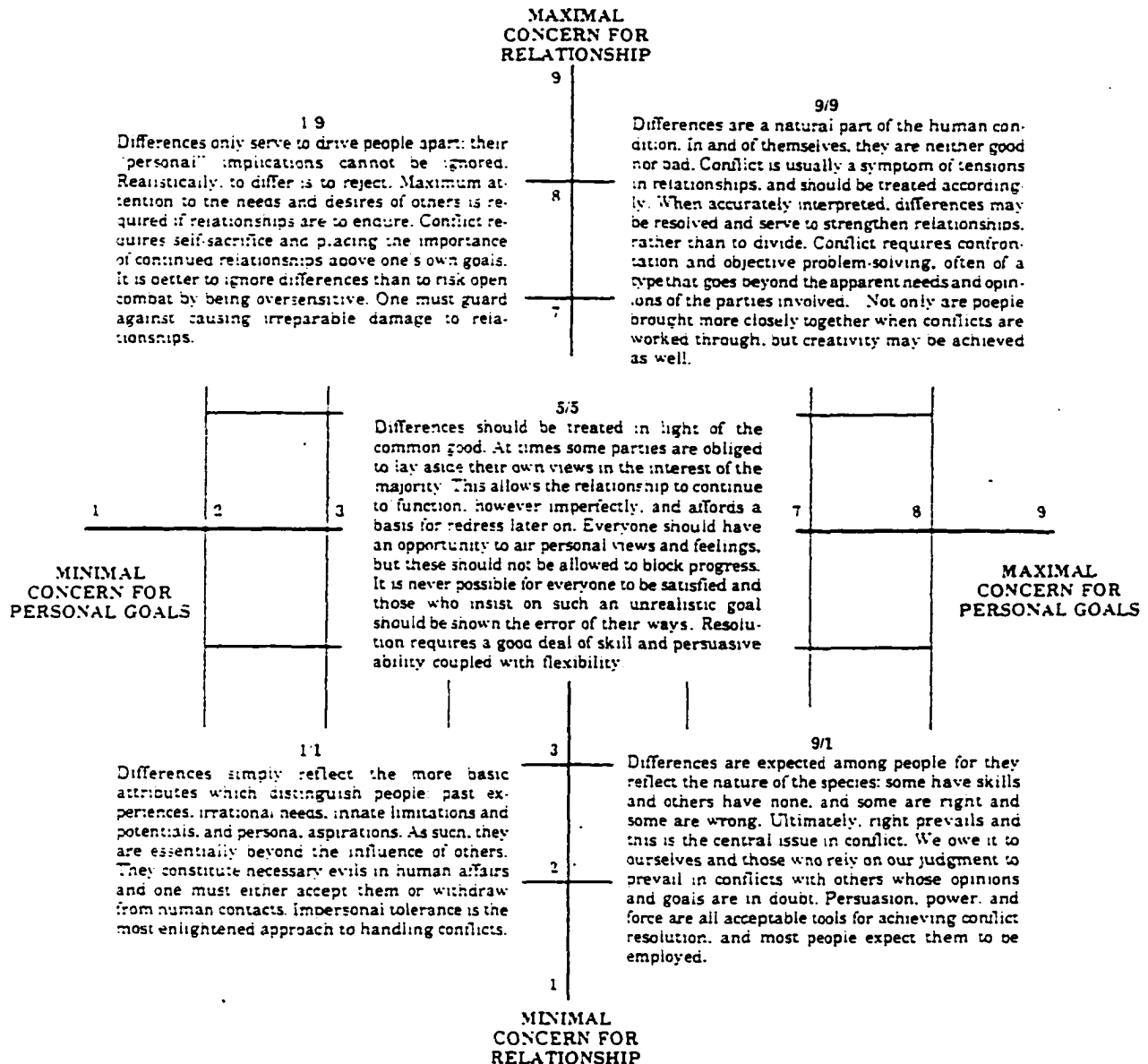
Approaches	Objectives	Human Relations
1. The 9/1 Win-lose style (Competing)	+	-
2. The 1/9 yieldlose style (Accommodating)	-	+
3. The 1/1 lose-leave style (Avoiding)	-	-
4. The 5/5 compromising (Compromising)	+/-	+/-
5. The 9/9 Synergistic style (Collaborating)	+	+

Source : Chang-Wook Choi, "Managing Conflict in the Church"

¹⁵ Choi, 97-98.

Figure 8

A Model of Conflict Management Style



Source: Jay Hall, Conflict Management Survey, 16.

When we think about relationships in a conflict, the persons involved are naturally emotional. This can make their attitudes rigid and stubborn and result in unwise actions. If a person normally follows a certain style of behavior in conflict, it is

very important that he or she become fully conscious it. Only as people become entirely aware of their customary problem behavior can they attempt to regulate it.

The Korean immigrant church has been hurt by its numerous conflicts.¹⁶ The church must divisions behind it. More importantly, the church can grow through conflict if it can be led to engage in point-by-point self-examination and growth in the power of Christ. Conflict experienced in the pluralistic type church can be a positive experience. Leas and Kittlaus have listed four major areas where conflict does play an essentially positive role.

1. Empowerment-an energizing and strengthening process for group life. Too much can be immobilizing. However, some conflict can move a group from an apathetic state into a newly energized group.
2. Established identity-boundary lines are formed versus the outsiders. It is strengthening to a group to come to determine who they are.
3. Unifying the in group-conflict plays down the differences within and forces them to become more effective as a task group.
4. Bearing the intolerable-conflict can make one aware of the limits of strength and help make livable the conflict by accepting the situation as it is experienced. One cannot know that without having experienced the conflict.¹⁷

Most Korean immigrant churches in America still retain the habits and attitudes its leaders learned in Korea. When we humbly ask God's Holy Spirit to give us wisdom and patience, there will be real opportunities to make our inevitable conflicts both creative and constructive.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Speed Leas and Paul Kittlaus, Church Fights (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), 35-41.

Practical Approach to Conflict Resolution

Creating an Effective Atmosphere

A important concern is to be able to identify conflict dealing with it openly and creatively, keeping it from being destructive. First, we need to remind ourselves that conflict is not always negative, that conflict can help clarifying and improve a relationship. Second, we need to remind ourselves that an I-versus-you atmosphere obstructs effective conflict resolution, and that we and the other party need each other as partners in working on the conflict. Third, we must accept conflict as natural and inherent such that it does not threaten. Fourth, we need to perceive the common goals and values inherent in the situation as relationships between parties are changed.

Relational Strategies

Relational strategies are needed in order to effect a comprehensive problem-solving approach. When our opening can do at least one of the following, it would be a first step in the conflict resolution process. First, try to establish a partnership of “we are dealing with our relationship and our conflict,” and dispel the fear that we are viewing the process as an I versus you battle for conquest. Second, try to let your conflict partner know that you are interested in improving the overall relationship while dealing with the particular conflict at hand. For example, “This conflict is just one part of relationship. By working together to deal with this particular problem, I believe we can improve how we handle other problem that we may come up in our relationship.” Third, try to affirm the belief that feasible steps to improvement can be

generated through a shared effort. Fourth, let your conflict partner know that we believe it is both possible and healthy for people in a relationship to agree and to disagree on certain points. For example, "We can use this agreement to make our relationship better. I can learn from you and you can learn from me." Disagreement does not have to be seen only as negative. Whenever conflicts appear, we need to build and maintain a methodology to allow growth releasing resolution to conflict.

Defining Problems and Clarifying Perceptions

Conflict over values are often the most difficult to resolve. We should try to make sure value really are involved, rather than preferences. When values are involved, several steps can be taken. First of all, the following question help the diagnosis: Who are the people and factions involved? What are the issues? What are the underlying causes? What is the extent of the conflict? Are these wider issues and how hard are the positions already taken ? What are the priorities ? How urgent is this conflict in comparison with others developing or present? The key of clarification is to make sure that we are perceiving conflict not a negative battle overshadowing all of the relationship, but as a chance to clarify the disagreements and to work together to resolve them in a way that also improves the overall relationship.

Several question can help clarify conflict. Are my expectation based on a conquest view of conflict and conflict resolution in which must either win or consider myself a loser ? Are my expectation for the immediate conflict resolution get together realistic given the time we have available to us right now ? Am I expecting the other party to behave in ways I want them to, or think in ways I think they should ? If they

do not behave or think as I want them to, will I make the mistake of interpreting that as meaning that they cannot be trusted ? The clarification of the perception have the power of conflict resolution.

Shared Needs

There is a balance between accepting the other party' needs and working with a conflict partner make sure that the needs are not just demands or desires. Sometimes the other party might not be aware that you have a particular need, or you may have been unclear in expressing that need. People sometime blame the other party for not responding to a personal need, but have they really expressed that need ? Needs are the foundation of existence and the building blocks of effective conflict resolution.

One wants the window open and the other wants it closed. They biker back and forth about how much to leave it open: A crack, halfway, three quarters of the way. No solution satisfies them both. Librarian asks one why he wants the window open: "To get some fresh air." She asks the other why he wants it closed: "To avoid the draft." After thinking a minute, she opens wide a window in the next room, bringing in air without a draft. The librarian could not have invented the solution she did if she had focused only on the two men's stated position of wanting the window open or closed. ¹⁸

The basic issue is not conflicting positions, but in the conflict between each side's needs, desires, concerns, and fears.

Shared Positive Power and the Use of Authority

We have to pay attention to differences between negative power and positive power. The negative power is coercive power. First, it attempts to disempower the other party in an attempt to increase one's own advantage. Second, it focuses on

¹⁸ Roger Fisher and William Ury, Getting to yes : Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In (New York, N.Y: Penguin Books, 1991), p 40.

specific attempts to gain advantage over the other party. Third, it focuses on “power over” rather than a “power with” relationship. Fourth, when one person is up, the other is down. It means that one party believes their power is in part derived from making the other party weak or at least in lessening its power.

Power is not some persons dominating others, but all persons fulfilling their richest possibilities and God-given potential in the interaction of the human community. The people of church need to be moved from this inactivity and fear to focus on utilization of power toward common goals and issues. Power is already present in the church. The use of power is a vital question for the church as a community. Depending on how the issue of power is worked through, the vitality and creative possibility of the church as a Christian community will be decided.

In order for the Korean Churches to be an authentic church, pastors have to convert from the authoritarian hierarchy into that of mutual service in their understanding of their order. The pastor should be willing to lay down his or her authority first so that lay leaders can follow him or her in order to have real leadership. The pastor would be given an authentic authority by the members of the church when he or she tries to lay down the traditional authority. In other words, when a pastor tries to serve lay people, the lay people will trust and give him authority as their leader. When such authority is given to leaders, their authority is no longer as a means of dominance.

Spiritual Approach to Conflict Resolution

Spiritual formation is very important to the rebuilding of selfhood, revival of hearts, as well as the reconciliation of the broken relationship and the faltering community. When we are in conflict, we are having a difficult experience. The first thing to do is to calm down and get some control of ourselves. In the New Testament, Jesus detached himself after a busy day of service. He prayed overnight on the mountainside before a serious choice of life. Jesus separated himself and prayed the garden before a grave test of life. We can try to have short/long retreat.

Through retreat, We need to relax in God during few days in a quiet retreat center with an open heart and spirit. The procedure is as follows:

Pray in Holy Spirit.

After a few day's rest in God, try to answer some questions as follows:

What have I received in these few days from God ?

What has God taught me in these few days of rest in him ?

What should I insist on the conflict process ?

What should I change or let go in the conflict process ?

What are my concerns with my conflict partners as well as with me ?

Bless and pray for the conflict partners.

After taking a retreat, we may go to our conflict partners to express our concern for them. The sharing of our responsibility to the conflict, our negligence of care and consideration for their feeling and struggling is essential. After mutual sharing, prayer for conflict partners make reconciliation possible. Without the

willingness to face the problem openly and constructively within church the positive value could not be respected and preserved. Through sharing pains and conflicts, healing can take place. Through mutual communication in the Holy Spirit, the members can experience “the Body of Christ”.

CHAPTER 5

The Prototype of the Korean Immigrant Churches

A History of Church Schism

Where the church is alive, it must deal with conflict.¹ It is not an exaggeration to say that the church's history has been one of conflict and schism right up to present. At the birth of Christianity, the church was prone to cling to the local traditions of the Graeco-Roman world. The rich cultural wealth of myth and resources both in the Judaic and Hellenistic worlds became the elements out of which ancient Christianity was formed. Thus, there were as many ways to understand the Christian faith as the resources were diverse. But the church was never comfortable with this diversity. Christian groups set up boundaries to protect themselves from other Christian, when they called "heresies" and from outside attacks. Eventually, the rich diversity of the early church hidden by the formation of so-called "Christian Orthodoxy" in the second and third centuries. Since then, the diversity of opinion has become demonized and the controversies over heresy have continued.

Therefore, the history of doctrinal diversity is also the history of conflict. And, this has been one of main reasons of church schism: there has never been a golden age of Christian unity and harmony in Christendom. But, it should not be scandalous, especially in the modern pluralistic world to accept that there can be different ways of understanding of Christian faith. The Presbyterian controversy between modern

¹ Bossart, 123.

theologians and fundamentalists in 1920s is representative of the difficulty Christians have in accepting a diversity of truth-claims.

The controversy revolved primarily around questions of theology and ecclesiology. The theological variations within the Presbyterian Church in the 1920s were manifested by the varying positions of the leaders of the conflict on the five fundamentals. Such variations were attributable to differing intellectual underpinnings. Modern theologians were convinced that creeds were only human attempts in the best language people could command to express religious experience. Thus, they argued, Christians had to adapt their creeds to modern times. They ascribed no normative value to doctrines as such. For the modern theologians, the church was a community united by oneness of purpose with Christ; it was the company of those who share the purpose of Jesus and possess His Father's Spirit for its accomplishment.

However, for the fundamentalists, doctrine was of paramount importance. The modern theologians seem to fundamentalists to abandon the Christian faith. For fundamentalists, doctrine was important first because what they believed in was true. In ecclesiology, for fundamentalists, the church was a body of like-minded individuals devoted above all to the propagation of right doctrine. In the view of the fundamentalists, the modern theologians were apostate and the fundamentalists the Orthodox. Thus, the fundamentalists pursued a militant defense of the faith.

Eventually, they left the Presbyterian church and started a new church on the pretext of preserving the Christian tradition for the sake of church. Such church schism was justified for fundamentalists because they considered it not a schism but a realization

of their hope and an event to recover the blessing of true Christian fellowship. The Presbyterian controversy in the 1920s is an example that church schism can arise due to theological reasons. This was a case where doctrinal purity was regarded by people as the more critical condition for the church's survival than church unity. For the people who left the Presbyterian Church, a more inclusive doctrinal stance that might embrace others was never considered. For them, people who were supportive of doctrinal diversity were considered impure and apostate.

The strength of the Korean church is the local church under its able pastor. Nevertheless, if the local church becomes an entity within itself, lack of cooperation among local churches can result. This is what happened to the churches in Korea. There are too many strong local churches which see little need of cooperation among themselves within the denomination as well as with other different religious group in the nation. The main division within the largest Presbyterian Church in Korea in 1959 between the ecumenical and the evangelical groups led to painful conflict at many local churches on the question of which group would control the church building. This schism resulted in the birth of two separate denominations known as the Tong Hap Presbyterian Church(ecumenical) and the Hap Tong Presbyterian(evangelical) Church. Each of these Presbyterian denominations has more than 5,000 churches with over two million members.

It is extremely difficult to create cooperative program for evangelism, missions and social services, which require wider cooperation from different denomination. The Korean church must learn the concept of partnership in Christian ministry among

different Christian bodies, as well as with other Christian organization in other countries.

The Prototype of Church in the Bible

What is the church? There has been much debating discussion on this question throughout Church history. While the New Testament itself offers diverse answers. One of the most important is that the church was built on the foundation of Jesus Christ. As Paul says, "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ."² Without the event of Jesus Christ there is no church. The Church is the body of Christ, he is the head of the church.³ The image of the body of Christ also emphasizes the connection of the church, as a group of believers, with Christ. Salvation, in all of its complexity, is in large part of a result of union with Christ. Christ in the believer is the basis of belief and hope. Paul says, "To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory"⁴ Christ is the head of this body of which believers are individual members or parts. The image of the body of Christ also speaks of the interconnectedness between all the persons who make up the church. Christian faith is not to be defined merely in terms of individual relationship to the Lord. There is no such thing as an isolated, solitary Christian life.

² 1 Cor. 3:11.

³ 1 Cor. 12:12,27; Rom. 12:4-5; Eph.1:22-23; Col. 1:18, 2:19

⁴ Col. 1:27.

Even if this definition is agreed upon, however, people may still have different view points depending on how they understands Jesus. In the New Testament, Jesus is depicted as the object of faith or the exemplar of life.⁵ There are also two leading definitions of faith in the New Testament: one is believing in God or Jesus or the gospel, the other is living according to Jesus' life.

For more conservative Christians, Jesus is exclusively emphasized as their object of faith as belief. They mistake such belief for what the faith is all about. These people's main theological concern is the doctrine of redemption: salvation by faith. However, they often do not take seriously Jesus' earthly life, the other object of faith, which should be another criteria for the assembly, the church, in the world. Jesus' life itself was a powerful message; his deeds were consistent with his words. Jesus' words revealed the will of God. During the short period of his ministry, he showed us how to live according to the will of God.

The church as a body of Christ is an important image in the New Testament. This indicates the centrality of Jesus Christ in the understanding of the primitive Christian community regarding the nature of the church. Christ is understood as the head of the church, and in the image of the church as a body of Christ, the church is perceived as a living organism. The church is not a static, but dynamic entity through which Christ's ministry is continued. The church as a body of Christ expresses, yet, another important meaning that is exemplified in the person of Jesus Christ—the unity through the brokenness. Jesus himself came into this world as “The lamb of God, who

⁵ Matt. 16:24; Eph. 4:1; Matt. 7:21.

takes away the sin of the world”⁶ and as the one who lived the life of forgiveness and acceptance in the world as well. The purpose of His life was in fact to show people how God accepts sinful human beings. He proclaimed the salvation of the Samaritan woman who was alienated.

His whole life was with the people, rejoicing with those who rejoiced, weeping with those who wept. To him it was the way that God wanted him to be. What Jesus hated most were people’s hypocrisy and arrogance and the barriers they put up among themselves. For Jesus, these were obstacles to building a new order, the Kingdom of God, in the world. Therefore, Jesus’ goal was also to seek the repentance the hypocrites and to tear down the barriers among people. For Jesus, it was the only way for human beings to experience God’s forgiveness and acceptance. The Church is not an institution for the privatization of faith but the assembly of people who are sinners but want to be forgiven and accepted by God by joining in the life of Jesus. It is the will of God which we perceive through Jesus’ life. This is the foundation of Christian spirituality. Faith is fidelity to God who would be with people living a life like Jesus. Nothing is more important than accepting and forgiving others in the church as Jesus did. The vital function of the church is to be the instrument of reconciliation amid human alienation.⁷ The church should be a shalom community. She should be a sign or sacrament of greater unity among men and women and a deeper unity with God.

⁶ John 1:29.

⁷ Eugene C. Bianchi, Reconciliation: The Function of the Church (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), 20.

Shalom means peace, harmony, completeness, wholeness, and concord. The basis of shalom is God. When we have life in God, we can extend and overflow this shalom to all our relationships. At the personal level, we can have true forgiveness and reconciliation with others. Shalom is essential to conflict reduction. Shalom can help us to release our personal struggles. If we can actualize shalom, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and the essence of God in our lives, we may solve our conflict with others more efficiently.

Paul and Barnabas, two of the best-known New Testament leaders, both called apostles, and close co-workers in pastoral and missionary ministries, found themselves at odds over the best way to do the Lord's work. In fact, so firm were their convictions and so fierce their contention that they went their separate ways. This painful separation shows the humanity of these apostles, men of limited wisdom and imperfect character. After the Jerusalem church council, Paul suggested he and Barnabas visit the churches they had established on their first missionary journey. Barnabas agreed, adding that he wanted to take Mark along. That name raised a red flag for Paul because Mark had abandoned the team when he was needed in Asia Minor.⁸ The suitability or pseudo-ability of Mark for further ministry was the bone of contention. Each had a strong argument. Paul thought the ministry to eternal souls would be jeopardized by softness to Mark. Barnabas deemed that the man, a potential disciple, would be endangered by severity. How often the same type of conflict surfaces in

⁸ Acts 13:13.

church life: the ministry versus the man, the work versus the worker, the principle versus the person.⁹

Discussion and disagreement are inevitable, but losing one's "cool" is wrong. In beginning to raise one's voice, one has to be careful that he is making a point of argument, not manifesting anger or contempt. A sign of spiritual as well as emotional maturity is the ability to argue without losing self-control. "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God".¹⁰ Though the friction between Paul and Barnabas was unpleasant and regrettable, their break-up proved productive, bringing blessing in disguise. Because God can make angry men praise Him, divine providence can override a division to yield compensating dividends. Contrary to the ecumenical thesis for church union, a division of forces may further the Lord's work. With two Gospel teams, Barnabas-Mark and Paul-Silas, the work was extended so that more churches were founded and more souls won.

Church growth leader Peter Wagner pointed that clashes between dynamic new leaders and settled older pastors in Latin American churches have resulted in what has been termed "growth by splitting." God promises that all things work together for good to them that love God. Church splits among Pentecostals have frequently resulted in accelerated growth for both sides of the split"¹¹

⁹ Flynn, 39-40

¹⁰ James 1:20.

¹¹ Flynn, 42-43.

Countless churches have been born through splits. One significant outcome was that Mark made good. From his first imprisonment at Rome, Paul wrote of Mark as a fellow worker and a comfort to him. To earn such commendation, Mark must have spent some time along the way serving with Paul. In his last recorded epistle, written from a Roman dungeon, Paul asked that Mark be sent to him, "Because he is helpful to me in my ministry." In his final days Paul wanted one whom he had rejected in his earlier years.¹² Eventually, Paul's sterns and Barnabas' tenderness may have contributed to this great blessing to the church.

The object of the church cannot be the church itself. Rather, the Church should be a place in which people experience forgiveness and acceptance in their relationships with others. Otherwise, the church does not deserve its name. Every individual and corporate religious activity in church eventually should exist to reaffirm and continue this function of the church. And every church hierarchy should exist to make it effective. Otherwise, the church is an institution that oppresses people rather than helping them to be liberated from oppression.

The Role of Korean Immigrant Churches

Avery Dulles proposes five models of the church which represent valid and essential aspects of the church: institution, community, sacrament, herald and servant.

The institutional model makes it clear that the Church must be a structured community and that it must remain the kind of community Christ instituted. The community model makes it evident that the Church must be united to God by grace, and that in the strength of that grace its members must be lovingly united to one or another. The sacramental model brings home the idea that the Church must in its visible aspects-especially in its community prayer and

¹² Philem. 24; Col.4:10-11; 2 Tim.4:11.

worship-be a sign of the continuing vitality of the grace of Christ and of hope for the redemption that he promises. The kerygmatic model accentuates the necessity for the Church to continue to herald the gospel and to move men to put their faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. The diaconal model points up the urgency of making the Church contribute to the transformation of the secular life of man, and of impregnating human society as a whole with the values of the Kingdom of God.¹³

In general, the church's mission can be divided into two parts. One is its internal mission within the church organization and the other is its external relation to the life of society outside its walls. Korean immigrant churches have many trouble both inside and outside. The most important of role of the Korean immigrant church is that of pursuing of reconciliation.

The Church as a Bridge over the Conflicts of Generations

Immigrant churches need to help their people develop a constructive Korean Immigrant identity. The immigrant's confrontation with the new culture and new social and political systems is profoundly disturbing to his or her sense of identity.

The church can help an immigrant find a balance between the new culture and old culture. Immigrants can quickly become acculturated in their new society. Often, the value of their old cultural heritage is lost or blurred, and immigrants often fail to realize their loss of cultural identity. Therefore, the Korean church needs to provide cultural education and activities such sings Korean hymns, wearing national costumes, sharing Korean food, and reading Korean Scriptures. By reminding immigrant of their traditional values, the church enables them to better adapt to their identity in United

¹³ Avery Dulles, Models of the Church (New York: Doubleday, 1974), p. 183.

States. As noted before, failure to find a cultural balance results in conflicts between first and second generation immigrant.

In every Korean church, there are conflicts between the first generation and the second generation. Within a church setting, these two groups can be encouraged to understand their differences and achieve some harmony, and thus the church can help become a bridge the gap. This can be accomplished in several ways. Dialogue between groups where pastors and members can listen problems to each other's problem, can be encouraged. Scripture lessons can focus on harmony. The most effective way to overcome generation conflicts is through bicultural and bilingual education. Moreover, English worship services should be offered along with Korean services. Therefore, Korean churches have the opportunity to develop programs that cultivate a unique Korean immigrant identity, an identity in some ways similar to that of the people of God despite two thousand years of wandering and persecution.¹⁴

Korean churches, like the traditional Jewish synagogues, have the opportunity to help their people see the will of God for them in their special circumstances.

The Church as a Social Center

Since most Korean churches focus too narrowly on the salvation of individual souls, it is important for them to incorporate social concerns into the church's

¹⁴ Shin-Hyun Jung, "The Social Responsibility and Ministry of the Church," in Korean-American Ministry, eds. Sang Hyun Lee and John V. Moore (Louisville: Presbyterian Church U.S.A., 1993), 106.

worship, preaching, Christian education, and lay adult programs. Preaching should not be only emphasize individual salvation, but should also highlight efforts to solve dehumanizing social problems such as abortion, sexism, racism, world hunger, nuclear weapons, and war itself.¹⁵ The Korean immigrant church plays a major role in the spirit of providing help to meet the need of others. For examples, the immigrant churches should help their people to get vocational training and job placement so they can smoothly adjust to American life and have good relations with the majority population. The churches also must teach their people English, American customs, history, government, and social economics. Therefore, they can become fully functioning American citizens who participate responsibly in American political life.

Most conflicts result from misunderstanding. Some Korean immigrants, as recent arrivals to America, do not have a tool, fluent English, to deal with misunderstanding. Korean immigrant churches can make a contribution to the community through providing them with language training and translation services. Christian contributions towards the democratic reform and social welfare are well recognized even by the secular society. However, there have been increasing cries from society as well as from many Christians that the Korean church must be more concerned for the needy by establishing more handicapped peoples' homes, hospitals, marriage counseling centers, homes for unwed mothers, ministry to prostitutes, rehabilitation centers, etc. Unless the Korean immigrants churches make their contribution to society, future church growth will be hampered.

¹⁵ Ibid.

The Church as Reconciling Community

For better understanding of other races Korean immigrant churches need to set up a Christian network among ethnic groups in order to develop and maintain dialogue. Such a network could prevent and resolve conflicts. The church's activities for maintaining itself include worship, preaching, counseling, Christian education, etc. Its outward activities include social service, community development and community organization.

According to Hyun-Jung Shin, in his article "Social Responsibility and Ministry of the Church," the more conservative churches tend to emphasize internal activities and understand salvation mainly as it applies to individuals:

The ministers of these churches often see their role primarily as a priestly or even a kingly function, not one of prophetic leadership. On the contrary, more progressive churches try to help their congregation become true members of the body of Christ according to the Bible's teaching. They seek to protect the weak, establish the kingdom of God and his justice, and free the common people from economic and political oppression.¹⁶

If the church truly loves its neighbors and understands that its task is to establish God's good will on earth, it must reach out beyond personal piety and individual faith. There is so much conflict in the world. Sometimes it results from injustice, sometimes from people's greed, and sometimes from people misunderstanding each other. When conflict happens, what does the church usually do? Most churches ignore such situations in pursuit of their own salvation. But some churches direct their energy toward bringing peace and hope where there is trouble. The

¹⁶ Ibid.

two extremes, one seeking heaven, the other directed toward the earth. The Church should be a place in which people experience forgiveness and acceptance in their relationship with others.

What Jesus showed us through his life was the way reconciliation. What Jesus really cared for was not their belief system but love and forgiveness. Love and forgiveness should take precedence over any doctrine if a church is an assembly of people who believe in, and follow, Jesus. In Jesus, God was reconciling the world to Him/Herself, entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. The Church should be the place where people can be healed from their pain and frustration. In the New Testament the church is depicted as the eschatological community, the fellowship of the end-time, in which the powers of the age to come are already at work, and which looks forward eagerly to the return of Christ and the fulfillment. God is already at work in the world in self-disclosure, leading people to strive for justice, liberty, reconciliation, and equality.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

The Korean immigrant church has been the center of Korean-American society since the early period of Korean immigration to the U.S. This is because most of the first immigrants were Christians and established their community around the church in the U.S. Later immigrants have done the same because the Church has been a culturally attractive place. The church have become a social center for more than just worshipping God. It is a meeting place for ethnic communities, and a center for preserving and teaching the cultures and languages of groups who have suffered from racial and socioeconomic discrimination in this country. This has contributed to the growth of the church in the United States. Eighty percent Korean-American people in the United States are considered Christians. There are many people who only adopted Christian faith since coming to this country. However, such a cultural context has often made the church more a cultural community rather than a faith community. There are often some people who try to make use of church order as a means to gain prestige or status both in the church as well as in Korean-American society. This may be more important for people who have failed to assimilate American culture and society. Competition for lay elder positions may reflect such motives. People's lack of identity in this society may cause them to change churches frequently. Church conflict and schism is the result of such complicated motives in addition to theological reasons.

Korean immigrants churches should be a places of comfort and encouragement where people can be healed from their pain. Rather, Korean immigrants churches were

places of conflicts and have been involved in troubles. What is the main reason for conflicts of Korean immigrants churches ? Chang-Wook Choi attempts to classify patterns of conflicts: immigrants life pressures, lack of understanding of church life, polarities in faith pattern, and social stratification. There is also conflicts between the first generation and the second generation in the Korean churches. Many Korean immigrants churches started as a result of churches dividing. Even if God uses church splits as a means of growth for Korean churches, they are nevertheless painful experience for all those involved. Church schism is evil in itself. We must recognize why a conflict occurs and how to manage or resolve the conflict. Jay Hall categorizes five types of conflict management: win-lose style, yield-lose style, lose-leave style, compromise style, synergistic style. The dominant styles of resolution for Koreans are competing, accommodating and avoiding. As we have seen, these styles have a destructive effect. Koreans have difficulty cooperating or collaborating. However, collaboration, which recognizes differences and allows groups to search together for creative solutions, maybe precisely the conflict resolution style Korean immigrant churches need to learn.

Jung-Young Lee claims that the cosmology of East Asian peoples can be summarized best in the bipolarity of nature, which operates cyclically in terms of growth and decline or the waxing and waning of the moon. Every thing in the world has its opposite. The opposites are necessary but also complementary to each other.¹

¹ Jung -Young Lee, The Trinity in Asian Perspective (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 24.

God as the Father is eternally unchanging in principle, but God as the Spirit is eternally unchanging in principle.² Even though there are many growing churches in this world, endless protests and struggles continue. There is no one to mediate the conflicts. The spirit is source of renewal and transformation. We need to look again to Jesus Christ as the spirit, the agent of reconciliation who showed the way of peace. The church should be the place where people follow and imitate the life of Jesus. Jesus Christ as the spirit is always renewing, changing, and transforming.

Richard Niebuhr provides five theological models for cultural change: Christ against culture, the Christ of culture, Christ above culture, Christ and culture in paradox, and Christ as the transformer of culture. He indicates that he favors the last model. He suggests that Christians reflecting the authority of Christ transform the culture, which means the “total process of human activity” or “civilization” including “language, habits, ideas, beliefs, customs, social organization, inherited artifacts, technical processes, and values.”³ Niebuhr’s transformation model treats culture as the only object that Christians should unilaterally transform. We cannot, however, separate Christians from culture. Even Jesus was not fully free from the effects of his culture, for the civilization of the first century influenced his life and thinking. Thus we should not only transform but also be transformed by God and culture. Korean-American Christians face two cultures: the Korean-American culture, and the United

² Ibid, 112.

³ Richard H. Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (New York : Harper, Torchbooks, 1951), 32.

States culture. In addition, we see Christ through two dimensions: Christian truth, and the Korean-American church. Thus Korean-American Christians face at least a four-fold task: self-transmutation, the transmutation of the Korean American church, the transmutation of Korean-American culture, and the transmutation of U.S. culture.⁴ First, Korean-American Christians need to change North American society, which suffers from sexism, racism, economic injustice, intolerance, violence, media monopoly, a drug culture. Using effective Christian resources and positive Korean traditions, we can overcome these problems. Second, we need to change our own community, which is patriarchal, exploitative, and racist. Traditional patriarchy allows domestic problems such as the problem of second generation. Third, we must change our churches, which are still patriarchal, hierarchical, and exclusively ethnocentric. Many Korean immigrant churches neglect or overlook second generation and non-Korean members affiliated through interracial marriage. We must transmute the ethic and ethos of our churches. Fourth, we must be transformed by the renewal of the heart in the Spirit of God. Incessant self critical reflection is an important step to the transmutation of the world.

The Korean churches should be a community of shalom. If we can actualize shalom, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, we can solve our conflicts. God already accepts us through Jesus Christ. The problem is whether or not we accept the acceptance of God. As Paul says, " So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new !"(2 Cor 5:17). This hope, however,

⁴ Park, 101.

gives us responsibility as well as potentiality to change ourselves and the world through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Nothing is more important than unity among the people of God. As part of the Church Universal, the United Methodist Church believes that the Lord of the Church is calling Christians everywhere to strive toward unity; and therefore it will seek, and work for, unity at all levels of church life: through ecumenical relationships with other churches. Koreans are now in a significant period of their church life, namely, a period of self-examination, union and renewing of existing churches. New trends and future prospects go along with self-criticism. The renewal of the church overcoming conflict should take place and be based on self-evaluation and self-study projects. If they are to carry out the mission of the Church effectively, the churches must be renewed through self-examination. The Korean Church is the most important institution in the Korean community. Although the Korean immigrant church is confronted with the seriousness of schism, the church nevertheless has sent its roots deep into Korean hearts and it will bear much fruit.

As a soon-to-be minister, I feel that it is our task to channel our resources to renew the church and its ministry. The challenges are great, but satisfying as well, since God will be always with us.

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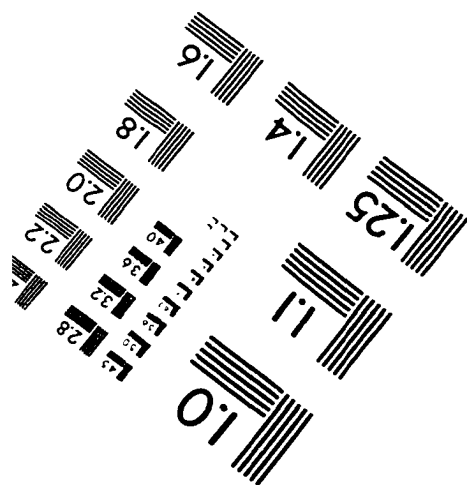
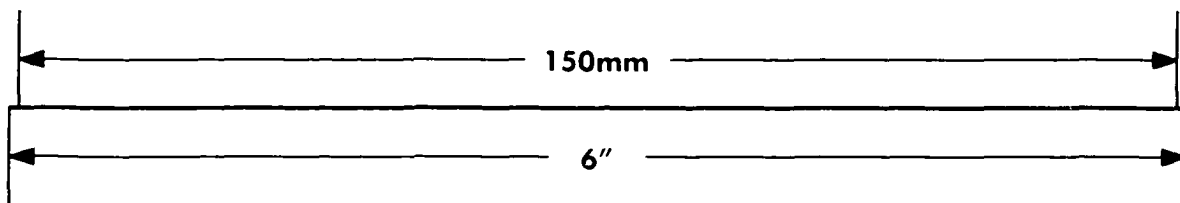
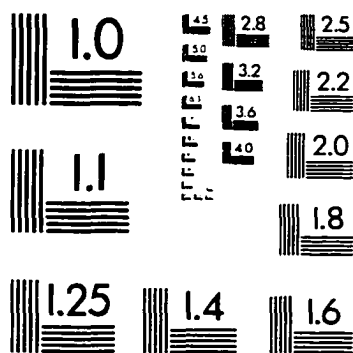
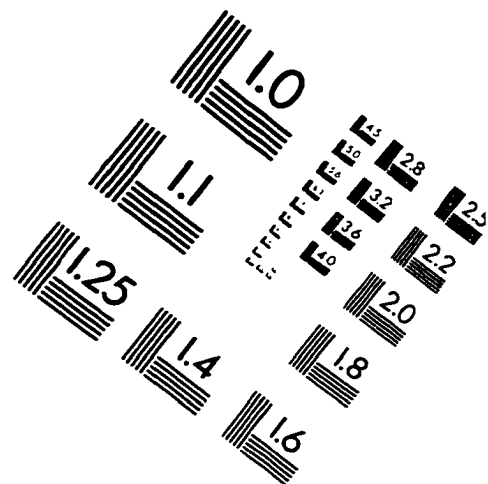
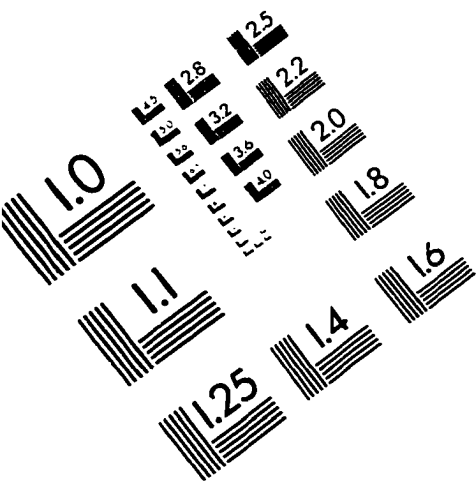
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